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OR

THE BOY HEROES OF 1781

BY T. C. HARBAUGH

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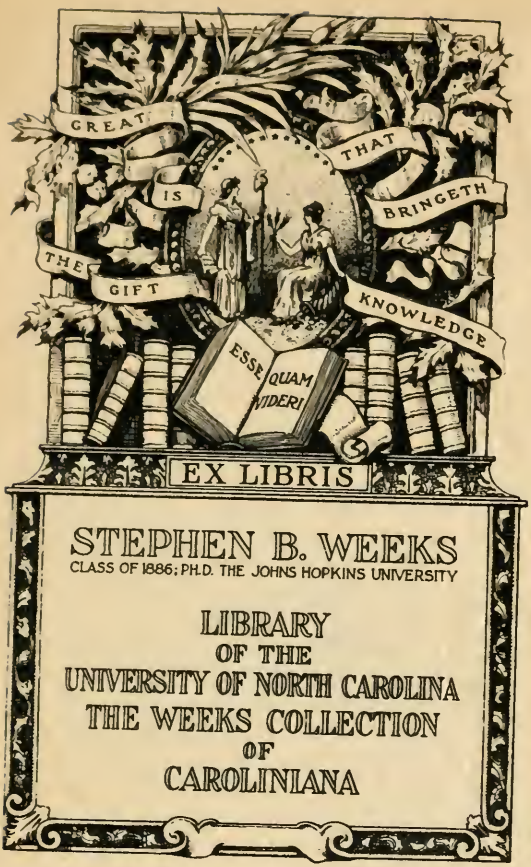
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UNDER GREENE'S BANNER

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BY

T. C. HARBAUGH

AUTHOR OF

"In Buff and Blue," "The Tory Plot," "Washington's Young Spy," etc.

PHILADELPHIA

DAVID McKAY, PUBLISHER

610 SOUTH WASHINGTON SQUARE

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Under Green's Banner

UNDER GREENE'S BANNER.

CHAPTER I.

CAPT. SAMSON MEETS HIS MATCH.

"What would I do if I had the power, eh? There wouldn't be a live rebel in the Carolinas. I'd make the trees bear the strangest fruit they ever bore. King George has been too lenient with his rebellious subjects. They deserve death, every mother's son of them! I wish he would give me power to chastise them."

"I'm afraid you'd need a larger army than Lord Cornwallis has."

"What's that, boy? You're one of 'em, I suppose."

"Just as you please, Capt. Samson."

Capt. Samson, who was known as one of the Tory leaders of the Carolinas, a big, brutal-looking man, six feet in his heavy boots, which were heavily slashed with mud, threw a look of withering hatred and scorn at the youthful speaker. It was seldom anyone deigned to cross him, and he felt the stroke.

"Why don't you take service under your Gen.

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Greene, who runs away from Lord Cornwallis like a rabbit from a hound? You're old enough to hang, by George! you are!"

There was no immediate response to this savage taunt.

The youth, who was operating the pole of a blacksmith's bellows in a little smithy on Rocky Creek in North Carolina, a stream that ran between the upper Peedee and the Catawba, bent to his work, but he did not take his eye from Capt. Samson.

"I don't know but what I may," he said at last.

"The sooner you go the better. We'll have rope enough left when it's needed for you."

The little group in the smithy looked at one another and feared for Rodney Black, the boy. They admonished him with their looks to curb his tongue while arguing with Capt. Samson, but he did not seem to fear the bitter partisan.

Old Jackson, the blacksmith, continued to beat out the horseshoe on the anvil, bending to his work with zeal, for he feared the Tory legion led by Capt. Samson.

Moreover, he was old, and had a family to support, though it was known that he was a rebel at heart and had performed some good work for the cause in the making of sabers for Marion and his men, who averred that better weapons were never put into the hands of the defenders of freedom.

The shoe was for the Tory's horse, which stood champing his bit at the door under a large tree. The home of the blacksmith stood near the shop, and standing in the doorway from which she could hear the voices was Jackson's niece, a fair young girl of nineteen, the belle of the district, and one whose heart was with Rodney, the boy apprentice.

She recognized Capt. Samson's vociferous tones, for she had heard his invectives on other occasions, and she longed for the time when the big fellow should fall into the hands of Marion or Hugar.

It was a long day when the Tory leader dropped a quarrel of his own making.

"Drop your work and go to Greene!" he snapped, returning to the altercation with Rodney. "By the way, I like to slap insolent little rebels."

He advanced across the dirt floor of the shop, and his eyes fairly blazed.

Rodney watched him closely, and worked the bellows.

He was a stout built boy of sixteen, and his muscles, owing to his occupation, had become as steel.

"You had better not," his eyes said.

"I don't take insolence. I wouldn't if it came from the rebel Washington!" continued the Tory.

By this time he was face to face with the young partisan. His great hand, which had helped more than

one patriot into eternity, was lifted in mid air and his face grew dark with passion.

Seeing that the man really meant to carry out his threat, Rodney dropped the bellows pole and stepped aside. It was a quick move on his part, and the next moment he stood erect, holding in his hands a hammer that leaned against the anvil block.

He looked like a person brought to bay, and his tense muscles told that he would defend his honor to the last extremity.

"Going to show fight, eh?" laughed the captain. "That's just what I like!"

"I'll defend myself, as everyone should."

"But you won't strike me with that weapon?"

"That's for you to find out."

Capt. Samson seemed to retract his hastiness, but he was not of the kind to retreat.

"Put it down!" he cried. "Throw it down, I say!"

Rodney did not obey. That was the last thing he intended to do.

"I'll give you half a minute, and, if at the end of that time you menace me with that hammer, I'll leave my mark on your face."

"You can try it, sir."

"I can, eh? By George! I'll accept the challenge, so here goes!"

With this he executed a sudden movement forward and his arm shot out toward the patriot boy.

It would have delivered a terrible blow, for the blood of the brute was at fever heat, but at that moment the hammer on the long handle was thrown forward and, beating down the captain's arm, struck him on the head.

With a half stifled cry the Tory reeled away and dropped to the ground, almost under his horse's feet.

The few spectators stood appalled.

Still holding his novel weapon in his hands, Rodney looked at his fallen foe and then glanced round the shop.

He knew that the lookers-on were, for the most part, with him.

Capt. Samson bled profusely, for the slanting blow had cut through the scalp, and when he opened his eyes and staggered to his feet he had a dazed look.

Rodney had not moved from his tracks.

"Where's the young rebel?" cried the giant.

"Here!"

Capt. Samson started forward, but the hammer shot into the air again, the hands of the boy clutching the handle with the determination of fate.

All expected to see the Tory draw one of the pistols in his leathern belt, but his hand did not reach in that direction.

He seemed to take another and wiser view of the situation, for he grated his yellow teeth and said nothing.

Old Jackson, whose work had been interrupted by the scene just described, resumed it, and in a few minutes he had fitted the shoe to the animal's foot.

It did not take him long to finish the job, and he turned to Capt. Samson to announce that the job was done.

Without so much as offering a farthing in pay the Tory leader mounted the animal and gathered up the lines.

"We'll settle this another time!" he cried, hoarse with rage, as he singled out Rodney Black. "I'll not forget that blow, you young rebel imp. I'll have the pleasure of stringing you up to a limb before long, and woe to the man who cuts you down!"

A smile of fearlessness was the boy's reply.

"We are going to drive Greene into the sea or catch his whole rabble!" he went on, laughing boisterously. "We've got him in a trap now——"

"He seems to get out of your traps with ease," grinned Rodney, for he recalled how Greene had slipped through the fingers of Cornwallis ever since Greene superseded Gen. Gates in command of the American army in the South.

"But he's in the last trap, confound him!" roared Samson. "We've got him on the hip now. And there'll be some tall hanging when we get him."

"You catch your hares before you skin them."

"What's that, you little demon?"

"I say you catch your hares before you skin them," repeated Rodney.

Capt. Samson threw one leg over the saddle as if about to dismount.

Rodney's hands went toward the hammer again.

"Never mind! I'll see you later."

"I hope so."

With this the Tory captain spoke to his horse and the animal, as if eager to get away, bounded forward and carried his rider under the trees that lined the road in front of the smithy.

Rodney looked after his foe with blazing eyes, but was silent.

"You've got yourself in trouble, boy," said one of the men; "for Capt. Samson never forgets anything."

"I'm sure he won't forget what the hammer did very soon."

"You've made an inveterate foe."

"Yes; of the meanest man in the Carolinas," remarked another man.

"Very well, if it is to be war between us, war let it be," answered Rodney.

"You'll see him again."

"Truly, I hope so."

"Look out if you do, for that man has no heart and no conscience."

Meanwhile, old Jackson, the blacksmith, had said

but little. He went about his work, while Rodney turned again to the bellows.

One by one the spectators went home, until Jackson and his apprentice were the sole occupants of the little shop.

The afternoon was closing fast, and the shadows of the trees were long.

Night would soon come again, and the partisans of the South would sally forth on their wild forays.

It was the seventh year of the war for freedom. Washington, confiding much in Greene, the "fighting Quaker of the Revolution," had intrusted the campaigns in the South to him. And well did he select his man.

Gen. Nathaniel Greene, born in Rhode Island, of Quaker parentage, was the man for the occasion. He had seen service at Trenton, Brandywine, Monmouth and other great battlefields of the Revolution.

Moreover, he worked with the commander-in-chief, always approving Washington's plans and demonstrating that he himself was great in the art of war, knowing how to meet and harass the enemy and how to elude the many traps set for his capture.

Greene himself was in early youth a blacksmith, and had studied by the light of the forge, filling his mind with information which in after life stood him in good stead.

Pure in morals, a brave patriot, and one of the best

known strategists of his day, he was able to cope with such officers as Cornwallis and Tarleton.

He was now retreating before the superior army of Lord Cornwallis.

His force, composed largely of militia from the South, was heading for Guildford Courthouse, where he expected to turn and give the enemy battle.

It was the most masterly retreat in military annals, for Greene had rivers to cross with the redcoats swarming behind him in all the panoply of war, eager and expectant, while the patriot army, half clothed, half famished, was pushing on, led by their indefatigable commander, who at no time lost hope.

"This is my last day at the forge," said Rodney Black, as he threw down the hammer with which he had been helping old Jackson.

"What's that, boy?"

"I'm going to take Capt. Samson's advice."

"You are, eh?"

"Yes; I'm going to join Gen. Greene, if he'll have me."

"When?"

"This very night."

"He'll take you, of course," was the answer. "You're stout enough to cut a dragoon clean through to the shoulders. It'll be a long ride alone, though."

"Perhaps I won't go alone."

"No?"

"Jack and I have been thinking of this for some time."

"Jack——"

"The Widow Glenn's son."

Old Jackson leaned on his hammer, which rested on the anvil, and studied Rodney for a moment.

"The cause needs young bloods," he said. "You will find two sabers in the garret. I put my best work into 'em. And," he lowered his voice, "if you get into a tussle with Capt. Samson, cleave him to the middle."

Rodney might have replied, but at that moment the sound of hoofs were heard and a horseman drew rein in front of the smithy.

"Tarleton is coming! Tarleton! Tarleton!" he shouted. "God have mercy on our souls!" and the next moment he was off like the wind.

It was a cry that had been heard before in the war-ravished South, and mothers had hushed their crying children by the mention of one name—the dreaded name of Col. Banastre Tarleton, the merciless leader of the British dragoons.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRAIL OF THE REDCOATS.

Rodney Black and old Jackson did not have to watch long to discern the cavalcade that came down the road. They were British, sure enough, and, moreover, they belonged to Tarleton's Legion.

Col. Tarleton, who afterward was rewarded for his outrages on the patriots with a major general's commission in the service of King George, did his infamous work well. He had for his assistants a lot of Tories, who were men after his own heart, and more than one hearth did they render desolate in the South during the Revolution.

As the dragoons came nearer a verse from a favorite song of the day floated out on the gathering shades of night:

"We're Tarleton's men, ho! ho! ho! ho!
Our life is gay and free;
We hang the rebels as we go
Upon the greenwood tree."

In a little while the troop came fully into view.

The foremost horseman was a burly fellow, with a swagger in the saddle that stamped him a braggart in scarlet, and his followers were little better, at least in appearance.

They did not appear to notice the smithy and, fortunately, they did not see the pair of keen eyes that watched them from its protecting shadows.

In the center of the squadron were two steeds that were not ridden by soldiers.

One of these was mounted by an old man whose hands were bound at his back, while his legs were lashed to the sides of the horse.

The other saddle was occupied by a young girl not past eighteen, whose looks betokened good lineage. She was bare-headed, and her eyes were fastened pityingly upon the old man at her side.

Rodney Black uttered a sharp exclamation the moment he caught sight of the pair.

"Look!" he cried to his companion, the blacksmith. "Master Callaway and his daughter, Mistress Alice, have fallen into the hands of the forayers!"

"It seems true, boy."

"They are taking them toward the British camp; but it will be fortunate for them if they are permitted to reach it alive. You remember that last fall three dragoons were killed on Master Callaway's place, and Tarleton swore revenge."

"Indeed do I recall that. Mistress Alice is not bound like her father, but she is in the hands of the miscreants just the same."

"And doomed like him."

"I have fears of that."

"Col. Tarleton swore at the time to pay Master Callaway the debt of blood. And now that he is in their hands it will be short shrift for him."

Old Jackson, who evidently was thinking deeply, made no reply, but watched the squadron out of sight.

"Something must be done for them!" cried Rodney. "They must not be allowed to die at the hands of those rascals."

"But how save them?"

"We must try, at all events."

"They will be taken to Tarleton, and not even the interposition of Lord Cornwallis can rescue the captives."

"But a trial shall be made," and Rodney turned from the forest forge. "I think I can find Jack, and——"

"What will two boys be against the minions of Col. Tarleton?"

"Not much, perhaps; but——"

"If they catch you, I fear——"

"Good-by!" interrupted the boy partisan. "Mistress Alice is too young and fair to suffer at the hands of those heartless wretches. She must be saved."

Before old Jackson could reply Rodney had bounded from the shop and was tearing toward the house.

The old blacksmith's niece met him on the porch and, startled by his appearance, caught his arm.

"Which way, Master Rodney?" she asked.

"The sabers! quick, Miss Dora! Your uncle said they were in the garret."

"The sabers?"

"Yes; the good ones he made secretly when no Tories were spying around. I need them!"

"Why both?" queried the half-dazed girl.

"Explanations later on. Quick! the sabers!"

Miss Dora bolted into the house and in a minute Rodney saw her emerge with two sabers in her hands.

"Here they are," she said, handing them to the young patriot. "I hope they will some day give a good account of themselves."

"They shall, and at no distant day, either! Good luck to you, Mistress Dora. I am off!"

"Surely, Rodney——"

"Ask your uncle," broke in the boy, looking into the deep brown eyes of the Carolina beauty. "Good-by!"

The girl watched him out of sight, and heard his footfalls die away in the dusk.

It did not take Rodney long to get off of the little place owned by the old blacksmith.

He did not keep to the road, but with the keen-edged weapons clutched eagerly in his hands, he ran through a little wood, then crossed a meadow and brought up in front of a small house on a slight knoll.

Here he stopped and sent forth a bird call, which

was undoubtedly a signal, for the door of the house soon opened and a boy of his own age sprang out.

"Jack!"

"Rodney!"

"The time has come!" said Rodney. "You remember our agreement. Where are the horses?"

Jack Glenn pointed to a stable near by.

"Come!" went on Rodney. "No time is to be lost."

"Is it for Greene's army, Rodney?"

"Yes, yes; but we have other work to perform before we reach the general."

The two boys hastened to the stable, the door of which Jack unlocked with eager fingers, and both went inside.

It did not take them long to saddle two horses that occupied the stalls.

"Mother will know all when she misses the horses," said Jack, as he led one of the well-limbed bays into the waning light. "I told her the other day about our compact, and she did not dissent. She is for the cause, would give up her life for liberty in North America, and she told me that when I went to Greene to put in some good strokes on the right side."

Up to this time Rodney had not acquainted Jack with the fight at the forge between himself and Capt. Samson, nor had he mentioned the arrest of Master Callaway and his daughter.

This he did a little later on while they rode along the road and Jack listened half bewildered.

"The dragoons cannot reach Cornwallis to-night," he said. "They must camp somewhere."

"Perhaps on Swift Fork. It is a good camping ground, you know. They will be guarded there by the lay of the land."

"That is true, and there, perhaps, they may dispose of their prisoners."

"I shudder to think of it," said Rodney.

"The wonder is that they got the old man without a fight," responded Jack. "Thomas Callaway has fighting blood in his veins, and he could not be taken fairly without bloodshed."

"Perhaps they played a stratagem. They may have first secured the person of Mistress Alice and after that the capture of her father was not difficult."

Jack thought a moment.

"Don't you think the hand of Red Dan is in this business?" he asked.

"What! the hand of that merciless scapegrace—the young rascal whom Mistress Alice struck across the face with her riding whip last summer?"

"The same."

"It may be. He swore revenge, too, and since she rejected his suit he has asked for a command under Tarleton, though he seldom fights as fair as that

leader. But I do not remember seeing Red Dan among the troopers as they rode by the forge."

"Of course he may keep in the background, though the real work of capture may be his."

"Woe to him if he harms either Mistress Alice or her father! But here we are at the creek. Let us see if the troops crossed the ford. If they have the ground will tell."

The boys dismounted and, holding the bridle reins of their horses, examined the soft fringe of the winding creek in the clear starlight, which had come on.

"They crossed here!" suddenly exclaimed Rodney. "Now our way seems clear. They appear to be headed for the old rendezvous on Swift Fork."

In another moment the youthful pursuers were on the road again.

The road, which wound across the country, was easily seen, and the boys galloped forward with high hopes. They had secured the two sabers to their persons, and in addition to these weapons they each carried a trooper's pistol, which Jack some time before had concealed in the stable loft—relics of the Cowpens.

A ride of seven miles brought them to the vicinity of Swift Fork, as they knew by the change in the ground, and at last they slackened their speed. It was now time to be cautious, for they did not care to run into the detachment of forayers. They feared that the British, if they had made camp, would sur-

round themselves with alert pickets, for the partisan warfare in the South had ever been one of constant surprises. Men like Marion, Huger, Pickens and Moultrie were nightly swooping down upon British camps, and woe to the ones they found unprepared for their swoop.

They would alight upon a sleeping camp, rush through it like a whirlwind, saber the half-dazed enemy and, before the rest could recover, they would be far away, riding toward one of the swampy fastnesses of the country, where they would be perfectly safe.

Fearful of meeting the outposts of a camp, Rodney and Jack proceeded now with the utmost caution. Swift Fork was not a wide nor a turbulent stream, except after a heavy rain, when it was sure to overflow its banks and the adjacent territory.

It flowed some distance between hills of considerable height, covered with a growth of stunted pine, but the old camping ground for the different forces was in a hollow or low ground well wooded.

The British had had considerable start of the two boys, therefore they could have reached the old ground well ahead of them.

It was possible, however, that they had concluded to keep on and rejoin Cornwallis and Tarleton, without so much as stopping for the night on Swift Fork.

Suddenly Jack laid his hand on Rodney's arm.

"Look to the left," he whispered. "Fires over yonder."

Rodney looked quickly in the direction designated, and caught sight of what appeared to be bivouac fires in the darkness.

"We are upon them, sure enough!" he said.

They drew rein upon a little rise, and for some moments studied the lights ahead.

Then they proceeded again, but riding slowly and with great caution, for their safety depended now wholly upon that.

In their advance they were well screened by the trees that stood in profusion.

Between them they could make out half a dozen fires that gave every appearance of being camp fires, and at last they caught sight of men in scarlet uniform lounging on the ground in the light.

Jack was for rushing forward while the foe suspected nothing, and, before he could recover, release Thomas Callaway and his daughter, but Rodney restrained him.

"Let us make a careful survey of the field first," the young blacksmith replied. "Let us locate the prisoners and then, if we can rescue them, we will try our best."

The two boys rode forward again for a closer view, and got it.

They discovered, sitting apart from the British, but watched by them just the same, Callaway and Alice.

They were within the line of light, and thus perceptible to the would-be rescuers.

The old man leaned against a tree, and the head of his daughter reposed in his lap, her nut-brown hair falling in abandon over his limbs.

It was a sight calculated to stir into action every drop of blood that coursed through the veins of the two boy patriots.

They looked to the priming of their pistols, and loosened the sabers.

Just as Rodney was about to whisper something to his companion there was a slight rustle in the leaves almost under their feet and the next sound they heard startled them beyond description:

"Surrender! you young rebels! We've got the drop on you good and hard. You are prisoners of the king!"

The boys could not answer; but they could look and see that they were surrounded by at least a dozen men, and that as many weapons covered them.

CHAPTER III.

THE NICK OF TIME.

The peril that menaced the boy partisans of the Revolution was anything but pleasant to contemplate.

The men who had so suddenly surrounded them seemed to have risen from the ground.

That they were British soldiers they saw at a glance, despite the semi-darkness that prevailed, and some of the weapons which they thrust forward were within a few inches of their faces. The first thought, of course, was quiet submission, then almost as suddenly a bold, courageous stroke suggested itself; but this would have magnified their danger.

They glanced at one another speechless in their utter amazement.

Had there been a chance for a bold dash they might have succeeded in getting out of their toils, for their horses were fleet-footed, and a match for the best in Tarleton's Legion.

But they thought of the other captives in the British camp, and wanted to render them the best of service, therefore, they held up their hands, expecting to be led to the fires as prisoners.

The weapons of the enemy were lowered a jot and the reins of their steeds seized.

Prisoners of King George!

The thought went through the boys like an arrow.

In a short time they had been escorted from the scene of their capture, but they were not permitted to come in contact with the lights of the bivouac.

They were removed behind one of the little knolls, where they were compelled to dismount.

The soldiers, rough-looking fellows, gathered round them and the leader leaned forward with a leer of triumph in his eyes.

"What brought you here, you young rebels?" he inquired.

"Haven't we a right to ride where we please?"

"That depends. Two young traitors wearing swords and pistols don't look much like peaceful people who love their king."

"You have just called us rebels," answered Rodney, with a smile. "If rebels we are we don't love the king."

"By George! that's right. And, as you're rebels, what's to hinder us from having a quiet little rope-stretching right here?"

"Nothing, if you don't mind disgracing the uniforms you wear."

The dragoon winced.

"You're spies! spies for Greene!" he said, accusingly.

"We are not spies," answered Rodney, with em-

phasis, though he feared the denial would do them no good.

"You have stolen upon our camp. You don't deny that, I hope?"

"We were near your camp; but not as spies!"

"Come, captain!" blurted out a big, impatient fellow, with a cropped mustache, "what's the use wasting time with the young rapscallions? Haven't we spared too many rebel fledglings already? They'll be in full feather ere long if we let them off. Here's a rope and a good limb."

This brutal proposition seemed to take immensely and immediately among the band.

"What was your mission?" demanded the leader again.

"It was a fair one—all's fair in war, you know!" said Jack.

"We don't think so. Washington, the high rebel, who will some day stretch hemp, says the same, no doubt, and yet he commissions men like the Swamp Fox, who hangs people in the dark of the moon and who is a guerrilla besides."

This estimate of Gen. Marion caused the boys to smile, especially when they compared him and his warfare with that sanctioned by Cornwallis and Tarleton.

"String 'em up, and be quick about it!" exclaimed

the dark-faced dragoon. "Here, throw the rope over the limb yonder, and give me one end of it!"

The boys prepared for death.

Was this to be the outcome of their first adventures as partisans in the saddle?

They saw ropes placed over one of the limbs of the nearest oak and nooses were quickly made and thrown over their heads.

"Will you promise to swear allegiance to the king if we spare your lives?" asked the leader of the band.

"To King George the Third?"

"Certainly; there is no other."

"We are patriots."

"Rebels, you mean."

"We swear allegiance to no king. We are for freedom in North America!"

"String 'em up, then!"

The hands of the boys had been already fastened behind their backs, and they felt the merciless nooses tighten about their necks.

"For the last time, will you become king's men?"

"No! Long live Gen. Washington!"

The next moment the boys were jerked from the damp ground with strong hands at the ropes.

Their captors seemed fiends incarnate.

Not far away slept Mistress Alice in her father's lap, oblivious of the terrible drama being enacted under the gloomy trees.

But the boys' time had not yet come.

As their bodies left the ground they heard shots and shouts and the whole camp seemed in an uproar.

The executioners paused in their work, and looked at one another.

"Down with the redcoats!" rang in the boys' ears. "Strike and spare not, men of Carolina!"

The ropes slackened as suddenly as they had tightened, and Rodney and Jack dropped to the ground.

Their ears rang with confused sounds, they heard the shouts of combatants and saw their late captors spring toward the camp from which the mingled noises came.

"Long live the king!" rose on the air as the two forces came together.

"Down with Tarleton's minions! Death to every Britisher in North America!"

In a moment, as it were, the fight seemed over. The surprise was most complete. The troopers in scarlet fled in dismay before the American partisans, some of the fugitives passing so near the breathless boys that they might have touched them.

As soon as they could, Rodney and Jack made their way to the late camp, where they met thirty-five Americans under the leadership of one Gorman, otherwise called Black Gorman, a bitter partisan chief, almost as much dreaded by the British and Tories as Marion.

Thomas Callaway and his daughter were rejoicing over their rescue when the young patriots came up.

"It was a narrow escape for you and your venerable father, Mistress Alice," said Rodney, with a bow, as he halted in front of the young girl.

He had seen her before, though his acquaintance with her was very limited.

"Indeed it was. It seems providential. I believe I am speaking to Mr. Rodney Black, the young smith of Rocky Fork."

"That is my name, and this is my friend, Jack Glenn."

Jack doffed his hat cavalierly, and paid his obeisance in a manner that delighted the young miss.

"Were you with the rescuing party?" asked Miss Alice.

"We intended to be the rescuing party," smiled Rodney, "but were interfered with. We have to thank Capt. Gorman for his arrival in the nick of time, for we were in a pretty tight place."

"Not captives, I hope?"

"Captives, and already noosed."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Callaway, who had overheard the last words. "You do not mean to say that they intended to hang you?"

"It looked very much that way," responded Rodney; "but here is Black Gorman himself——"

The famous rebel had just come up, and, seeing the boys, broke out into a laugh.

"How did these young fish get into our net, I should like to know?"

"They were captives like father and I," said the young girl. "But until just now I was unaware of the fact."

"Captives, eh? Are you rebels, too?"

"Rebels to the core!" exclaimed Jack.

"Then hurrah for Washington!" shouted Black Gorman at the top of his voice. "You're a hearty pair, upon my soul, and, methinks, you're agile and strong enough to take service under Black Gorman."

"We were going to Gen. Greene," said Rodney.

"Then to him you shall go with Black Gorman's compliments. Tell him I send him good reinforcements, and that while you two boys live King George will never conquer America."

"Thank you, Capt. Gorman. We shall be glad to report your victory to-night."

It was found that the weapons carried from the Jackson home by the two boys had beeen left on the battlefield, and they were soon in their possession once more.

Three British dragoons had been killed in Black Gorman's rush on the camp, and it was thought that at least a dozen more had been able to ride away with serious mementoes of the occasion.

Mounted once more on their horses, Rodney and Jack prepared to ride to Greene's camp.

"I wish you a safe journey," said Mistress Alice, as she came alongside and put up her shapely hand. "I thank you just as much as if you and not Capt. Gorman had been our rescuers to-night. You were willing to risk your lives to save us. I trust I shall hear from both of you, and I know the reports will be encouraging."

"We shall see that you hear nothing bad of us!" responded Rodney, who knew that he spoke for his companion as well. "Under Greene's banners we hope to render our beloved country some service. Let us hope that you have seen the last of the enemy."

"Oh, as to that, it is not likely," was the answer. "Until these British are driven out of the Carolinas we are liable to be troubled by them."

"Do you think, Mistress Alice, that Red Dan had a hand in this affair?"

The fair girl started and threw a swift glance toward her father.

"I fear to answer your query as it seems to demand," she replied.

"Very well, then, I will not press the matter."

"He is a despicable person," she said, with rising feeling. "Because I rejected his advances he turns on me like a serpent. While he was not among our captors, I am not ignorant of all things."

This was enough, and told Rodney all he wanted to know.

"Young gentlemen," said Thomas Callaway, at this juncture, "I hope you will give a good account of yourselves. You ought to reach Gen. Greene to-morrow some time, for you have excellent animals. Be on the watch. You don't know when some band like the one that pounced upon me may give you another turning over. You will present my compliments to Gen. Greene, and tell him that while Thomas Callaway lives one man at least will breathe the air of liberty. Say to him that I am still the friend of Washington, still the unconquerable patriot and the hater of kings."

"We shall be pleased to deliver your message."

Everything being ready for their departure, the boys looked at the partisans to whom they owed their lives and Black Gorman admonished them to ride fast, but with extreme caution.

He told them where to find Greene's army, and mapped out the shortest way to it, for all of which the boys thanked him.

Then after shaking hands once more with the Callaways, whom they were to meet again under exciting circumstances, they turned their horses' heads toward the north and galloped off.

"That was a close call, Jack," said Rodney, when they had left the scene of their adventure behind.

"Too close to be comfortable."

"But for the timely arrival of Black Gorman and his band there might have been two young rebels less in North Carolina."

"And two less swords for Greene, eh? Did you notice, Rodney, how Mistress Alice started when you spoke of Red Dan?"

"Yes; that rascal was at the bottom of all their troubles. He dared not show his face in the open, but he undoubtedly planned the raid upon the manor. I trust we will meet him in the near future."

"We probably shall, if he is brave enough to appear on the battlefield, which I seriously doubt."

"I would go out of my way to seek him. But let us first become a part of Greene's command. We can lay our other plans after that."

All through the night the boys rode northward, the whole time on the alert, and during the forenoon of the following day they fell in with a scouting party belonging to Col. William Washington's command, and their hearts beat with joy and pride, for they knew that at last they were under Greene's banners.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER AND SON.

Leaving Rodney and Jack on their way to Greene's camp, escorted by the troopers who became so famous during the Revolution under the leadership of the gallant Col. Washington, we will proceed to see more of another person who has been already mentioned in the course of our narrative.

"Red Dan" Jeffrys was the son of a wealthy planter of South Carolina.

At the age of seventeen he was a wild, roystering blade, fond of sports of all kinds. Always supplied with money by his father, who from the first had been a Tory, the scion of the house of Jeffrys had his own way in everything.

He imbibed the thoughts and feelings of his parent, he praised King George on every occasion, and naturally drew against him the Whigs who opposed everything the ranting Tories did.

On one occasion Marion swooped down upon the Jeffrys' plantation and deprived the old Tory of some good horses, saying that they were just the animals he wanted to keep Tarleton on the move, and this event, of course, only served to embitter more than ever the losers of the steeds.

Red Dan was a tall and handsome young man. He had gained his well-known nickname from the color of his hair, and he thought that he was supreme in love affairs wherever he went.

But it had taken Alice Callaway to teach him a lesson he never forgot.

The fair girl, intensely loyal to the cause of liberty, repelled Dan's lovemaking with emphasis. He would not be put off, arguing, in his impulsive way, that he would honor her in becoming her husband, as if the Jeffrys blood was better than that which flowed through Callaway veins.

This insinuation the Whig maiden indignantly resented.

One day Red Dan, in pushing his suit, got Mistress Alice's riding whip across his white cheeks, and it stung not only his face but his very soul.

It was the night before the capture of Thomas Callaway and his daughter that Red Dan might have been seen in a deeply wooded grove near the banks of a little river.

He had ridden thither on his spirited black, which he had tethered to a sapling, and was walking up and down the sward, flecking bits of mud and dust from his leggings.

Presently he spied some one coming down the narrow road leading along the stream, and in a short time he was looking up into the face of a dragoon.

The soldier wore the insignia of a lieutenant on his person, and greeted Dan with a smile.

The two repaired deeper into the grove, where they found a fallen tree, upon which they sat down.

"You understand," said Red Dan, getting quickly at the matter nearest his heart, "I want the whole thing done with neatness and dispatch. As for the old man, I don't care what you do with him—it might be well to string him up, for he deserves a rope—but the girl is not to be harmed."

"I see. You don't want the feathers of the pretty bird ruffled."

"That's it. And don't destroy the nest, either. Callaway Manor may come into my possession one of these fine days, and I don't want it laid waste."

"Do you think the old man will show fight?"

"He's liable to do that. There's fighting blood in his veins. I believe his ancestors fought under Cromwell at Naseby."

"Then the old eagle may show fight."

"But you know how to surprise him."

"I guess we can attend to that. After we have them in our hands we will make off as rapidly as possible."

"You had better, for Black Gorman and his cohorts have been in the vicinity lately."

The dragoon was silent a moment, during which time Red Dan thrust his hand into his pocket and withdrew it, filled with gold coins.

"Here's half the wage," he went on, handing the money to the dragoon. "The rest will come after you have carried out your part of the bargain."

The soldier took the coins and arose.

"We'll do the thing up brown. Besides, we've been longing to get ahead of the old eagle, who has his nest at Callaway Manor, and we won't give him much mercy."

"The less you give him the better it will suit me," said Dan.

"I'll see you later on," he continued, as the dragoon moved toward his steed. "If I'm not mistaken, I'll see a good deal of you fellows hereafter."

"Then you intend to enter the ranks?"

"Yes; such is my intention. Col. Tarleton has offered to take me in, and I think I would look pretty well in a red coat; don't you think?"

"As well as the best."

Both men laughed, and Red Dan accompanied the dragoon some distance down the road.

When the young man reached Jeffrys Manor a few hours later he crossed a wide hall and entered a large room, in the middle of which sat his father.

Austin Jeffrys had long since passed the middle period of life, and was nearing its close.

He was an imposing looking old man, with a wealth of snowy hair that fell in the wildest abandon over his still shapely shoulders. His nose was sharp and

drooping like the bills of some hawks, and his eyes as gray and keen as an eagle's.

As Dan entered the chamber the elder Jeffrys looked up and uttered an exclamation of welcome.

"You're a pretty blade," said the old man. "Where have you been roystering now? If I mistake not, you've not been home for three days. Did you stay till the gamblers fleeced you?"

"I haven't seen Eagle Tavern for three whole days," answered Dan, with some acerbity. "Haven't I a right to ride where I please——"

"Ready to be picked up by some of these rebel foragers? Don't you know that men like Marion or Black Gorman would like to catch you and hold you for ransom?"

"Well, you'd ransom me, I suppose?"

"Who would if I did not, I should like to know?"

Red Dan threw his riding whip upon a table in one corner of the room and went over to the window and stood there.

His back was turned to his father, who regarded him in silence from the depths of his chair.

Austin Jeffrys was a widower, having lost his wife, Dan's mother, before the beginning of the war, and Heaven had blessed him with no other heir.

"Dan," he said at last, when he had completed his study of the figure at the window.

"What is it?"

"I want you to be looking round for a wife pretty soon."

"Time enough yet," replied Red Dan, in a careless manner.

"But I say now! And, mind you, I don't want you to be looking after any of these fair rebels."

"Oh, you are to select for me, then?"

"I am to have a say in the matter, understand that."

"And I am to marry the person whom you see fit to choose for your daughter-in-law? Well, my dear father, whom have you selected? I am dying to know."

The old man pushed back a strand of white hair which had fallen over his forehead.

"They tell me," he said, looking into Dan's face, "that you have been making love."

"Indeed? Some little bird broke the news, I suppose."

Austin Jeffrys did not seem to notice this sarcastic levity on his son's part.

"They have said that you want to ally the house of Jeffrys with that of an infernal rebel."

"Love seldom takes notice of politics."

"It must in this affair!" cried the old Tory, bringing one hand down upon the side arm of the chair.

Dan was silent.

"You, 'tis said, have been making love to the child

of an old foe of mine—to the daughter of Thomas Callaway."

"Well, what about it?"

"This, sir!" roared Austin Jeffrys, as he left his chair and towered before his son like a Lear suddenly lifted in rage, "it shall not be so! You must not think of taking for a wife the spawn of this rebel. Why, sir, he defied the king, he reads rebel newspapers, gives aid and comfort to our enemies, and entertains the dastardly Swamp Fox and his minions."

The rage of the speaker was terrible.

"They say that you are forcing your attentions upon his daughter, that she does not care a pinch for you, yet——"

He seemed to break down suddenly in the intensity of his overweening passion, and Red Dan waited coolly for him to resume.

"By the powers above! I'll send you into the army, and let the rebels split your head before I'll see you the son-in-law of Thomas Callaway!" he suddenly shouted.

"I've been thinking of joining Col. Tarleton myself."

"You have, eh? That's good. But tell me if it's true that you've been thinking of Mistress Callaway as well?"

"I have. She's quite handsome, you know——"

"But she's not for you. You must leave off this

affair. I won't permit it. When can you join Tarleton?"

"Say the day after to-morrow."

"Will you really go?"

"I will. I like a busy life, and those who ride with him find it to their heart's content, they say."

"Then to Col. Tarleton you go the day after to-morrow. You can have Black Betty, and she can overtake the fleetest rebel that ever showed his heels to the king's dragoons."

Red Dan stepped back.

"Is that all?"

"You are to give up this love affair with Mistress Callaway," was the reply. "Is it true that so long ago as last summer she cut you across the face with her riding whip?"

"I believe it must be, since you seem to be so well informed, sir!"

"Good! Good for her!" laughed the old Tory. "Cut my son, Dan, with her whip! I ought to pension Mistress Callaway. Now go, sir, and make preparations for joining Col. Tarleton."

Red Dan strode from the room and shut the door with considerable emphasis.

"Wants me to get killed, I suppose," he said to himself. "Well, though I ride with Banastre Tarleton, I will see to it that no rebel saber leaves its crimson mark on my anatomy."

Beyond the door an old man was striding up and down the room with the impatience of a tiger.

His hands were clinched and his face was white.

"I'd hang all the rebels in the Carolinas if I could before my son Dan should marry Mistress Callaway!" He breathed hard. "I have selected a wife for him; but I didn't see fit to tell him her name. Not just yet."

A moment later Dan's face appeared at the door.

"Here come some of your friends, father," he announced.

"Friends of the Legion?"

"Well, hardly," and Dan withdrew.

Austin Jeffrys soon appeared on the long vine-covered veranda of the manor house, and fixed his gaze upon some twenty horsemen who galloped up the road. They soon turned into the grounds, and their leader saluted the old man.

"Anybody worth hanging round here?" asked Capt. Samson.

"Not just in this vicinity, I believe. You might find some good hanging timber a little further up the road."

"Then we'll look for it. By the way, we're quite thirsty and would like a little wine."

Knowing that it would not do to refuse the Tory marauders anything, Austin Jeffrys sent a slave into his wine cellars, and in a short time the band—a rough-

looking, merciless set of men—were helping themselves.

They drank numerous toasts to King George, and, of course, confusion to Washington and Greene; they filled their glasses to the master of the manor, and old Austin bowed as they drank his health.

They emptied a good many bottles, and at last rode off with wild huzzas, Capt. Samson looking like a wild Cossack in the saddle.

"That's a pretty lot of rascals," smiled Austin Jeffrys, as he looked after them. "King George would blush to own them as his allies. I hope the day will come when the last of them will go down before the broadswords of the Swamp Fox. I'm ashamed of the whole lot, but they're for the king, and so am I."

"You treated your friends right royally," said the voice of Red Dan at his father's elbow.

"It was the quickest and cheapest way to get rid of them. It is a burning shame that we must call such villains our friends. I trust it will not be for long any more."

CHAPTER V.

RODNEY AND JACK'S FIRST FIGHT.

When Rodney and Jack reached Greene's army they found it encamped at the Iron Works on the Haw, just above High Rock ford.

The wily commander, who so far had completely outwitted the renowned Cornwallis, had halted there for reinforcements before risking the battle he had planned at Guildford.

His army consisted for the most part of militia, but through it ran a sprinkling of veterans, including Lee's Legion and Washington's splendid cavalry. The militia were men who enlisted for no definite period, who frequently ran at the first fire, leaving the older troops to stand the brunt of the engagement.

But for his militia Greene would have won more battles than he did, but for all this his defeats were really victories, for the enemy was usually so crippled that he dared not pursue.

The boys rode into the American camp, and Col. Washington, who was from the first proud of his young recruits, presented them at once to Greene.

They saw a rather portly man, with a kindly countenance and blue eyes. The effects of his long retreat before the British army had told but little on the in-

trepid Greene. He seemed as fresh after his two hundred miles of marching and countermarching as when he began it.

He was simply tireless, and could wear out the youngest man under him.

More than once Cornwallis thought he had the American in his net, but time and again Greene crossed the rivers, putting them between him and the enemy, so that when the British were about to bag their game it was out of their reach, and a turbulent stream rolled between.

This was actually done four times that eventful spring, and at last, with the Haw between him and Cornwallis, Greene prepared to measure arms with one of the ablest generals of Europe.

"So you wish to take service under my banners?" asked the general, when the boy partisans had been presented.

"That is what we are here for," answered Rodney, pleased with the great soldier's kindly manners.

"Very well, I shall be too glad to test your courage, which I am sure will prove all I look for. You are strong and active. I am certain you will give good reports of yourselves. Are you mounted?"

"We brought our horses along."

"Then they escaped the British and Tories?"

"They would have had a fight for them had they tried to take them," said Jack, his eye kindling.

"I've no doubt of that, my boy. Capt. Trevors, you will see that our young friends are cantoned with Col. Washington's command."

The captain saluted.

"You are armed, I see," continued Greene. "Who made your broadswords?"

"Abner Jackson, of Rocky Ford."

"Which is guarantee that they are finely tempered. I wish I could arm a legion with the old smith's weapons. There are none better in North Carolina."

"He makes good blades, sir."

"The very best, and, what is still better, he makes none for our enemies, if he knows it."

"Not unless he is forced to."

"Ah, do they force Jackson to be their armorer?"

"They did so once, and he made a broadsword for a doughty Tory leader, but he knew how to temper it so that it broke at the hilt the first stroke."

Greene laughed at this, and his blue eyes kindled.

The boys were then shown to the camp of Washington's troopers, where they again met their leader, who received them kindly. He said that his force had become depleted by the arduous campaign they had just passed through, and that he needed all the good swords fortune chose to send him.

"Would you mind going out on a scout?" he asked the two boys, several hours after their arrival in camp.

"I don't care to hurry you into action, but I suppose you didn't come to us to remain idle."

"We came for action," replied Rodney, "and any service you have for us will be welcome, whatever it be."

"We hear that the Tory chief, Capt. Samson, is in the vicinity, and we would like to let him know that there is some mettle in Continental swords."

Rodney started at these words.

Was he to meet Capt. Samson so soon after the affray at the smithy? He had not forgotten that individual's last words, which composed a threat, and now that he was armed and in many ways the Tory's equal, he burned to encounter him again.

"I should like to meet Capt. Samson," he said, eagerly.

"An old enemy, eh?"

"We've met before, but under different circumstances."

"He is a braggart, a sort of Bombastes Furioso; but for all this he gives us no end of trouble. Marion, shrewd as he is, has failed to bag this Carolina fox, but we hope for better success."

Col. Washington waited till the shades of night began to lengthen among the pines, when twenty men were chosen from his command, and Rodney and Jack took their places in the ranks.

Not willing to intrust the expedition to a subaltern, Washington took command in person.

A better lot of saberers never rode through the Carolina woods.

Col. Washington was the Murat of Greene's army, and whenever he swooped down upon infantry the red-coated ranks recoiled, for he charged like a whirlwind, and his strong-armed heroes often cut their way through the scarlet legions. He had saved the day for Greene on more than one occasion, and the commanding general knew well that he did not have to call in vain on Col. Washington.

The country of the Haw was well wooded, but here and there little open places peeped forth, and now and then a house was to be seen.

The command rode along the river for some distance and then struck off into the country, galloping over the hills and underneath the pines.

Word of Capt. Samson's appearance in a certain region had been secretly brought to Washington, and the neighborhood was so well known to the American that he needed no guide.

They half expected to find Capt. Samson and his marauders engaged in some pestiferous business not in accordance with the rules of civilized warfare, for he disdained such and fought as he pleased.

For some miles the ride was without moment. The boys liked their new experience; they chatted with

the others as they rode along, but suddenly word for silence passed through the ranks.

At last the little party came out upon the summit of a gentle rise that commanded a fair view of a valley.

In another moment voices were heard and then a flame shot heavenward.

"At their dastardly work," said Col. Washington, through set teeth. "The wolves of the South are having a feast to their liking. Forward!"

The command descended the hill in complete silence, their weapons being held in such a manner as to prevent noises, but at the foot of the rise all halted again.

The flame had increased.

A house was burning, a mile away, and already dark forms could be seen in the glow.

Capt. Samson, or some one else, had fired the home of a Whig, and his men were carrying on like a lot of demons.

Every now and then their shouts came to the ears of the American avengers.

It made their blood boil.

At a signal from Col. Washington the whole command moved forward again.

Nearer and nearer, like death eagles, they approached the enemy.

A dense clump of timber hid them from the Tory band.

The horses of the Americans seemed to know as well as their riders what was going on.

Their muscles quivered for the fray, but they curbed their impatience.

At the edge of the timber, after passing through it unobserved, the voice of Col. Washington startled everyone that heard it.

"Forward! Americans! Charge!"

Like a score of thunderbolts the little force dashed from the copse and fell upon the forms about the burning house.

It was a complete surprise, but the Americans soon discovered that they had a stubborn foe to deal with.

"Down with the rebels!" roared a voice above the sound of cracking pistols.

"Death to the house burners!" came back in reply.

Col. Washington's command was bravely met after the first onslaught.

Fully forty Tories sprang to saddle and advanced upon their foes.

The clash came fairly in the spreading light of the blazing home.

The Americans attempted to ride through the marauders' ranks, then to turn and cut them down from the rear with their heavy broadswords.

But the Tories, led on by their chief, a giant with a

black beard, prevented the carrying out of such tactics, and for the moment Col. Washington was forced to fall back.

In full face of his enemy he reformed his ranks and came on again.

This time nothing could stop the impetuous Americans. They broke through the Tory lines, scattering them like chaff, while their cry, "Washington and Liberty!" soared to the stars.

During the *mêlée* Rodney and Jack kept close together.

They plunged into the thickest of the fight, and Rodney had his cap swept from his head by a sword that barely missed his skull.

Almost at the same moment Jack, seeing his friend's peril, discharged his pistol squarely into the face of the Tory, and a saddle was emptied as the marauder released the lines and tumbled to the ground.

"Quick! the big captain, Rodney!" cried Jack. "I believe it is Capt. Samson."

The giant leader of the Tory band, seeing that his men were fleeing before the swords of Washington, had turned himself, and, hatless, was urging his steed to his utmost efforts.

This was the man Rodney had singled out.

"Come, Jack!"

The boys spurred their steeds after the fleeing foe.

In a moment they were out of the line of the fight-

ing, seeing nothing but the horseman, who had redoubled his efforts.

It promised to be an even race, for the three steeds seemed well matched.

Rodney forgot everything but the affair at the forge; he yearned to meet Capt. Samson again.

"Take him on the left," he said, hurriedly, to Jack. "We must overtake him this side the dark copse yonder."

The boys separated.

Rodney turned a little to the right, while Jack rode to the left; thus they hoped to come alongside the Tory leader, one on each side and simultaneously.

They bent every energy to this one purpose.

At last they could hear the panting of the hard-pressed horse compelled to carry his heavy burden in such a race for life.

Not once did the Tory look back. He seemed to imagine that at least half a dozen of Washington's veteran troopers were at his heels.

The noses of the boys' horses were nearly at the hunted courser's flanks, when suddenly the man in the saddle turned.

A cry of recognition fell from Rodney's lips.

Sure enough it was Capt. Samson!

The blazing eyes of the Tory leader flashed their baleful light into the faces of the boys.

Jack rose in his stirrups as he swung the saber over his head.

"Surrender!"

A hoarse cry of defiance was the answer he received.

At the same moment Rodney, standing almost erect, dashed alonside.

"Down with Tories!" pealed from his throat.

Capt. Samson tried to parry the blow he saw about to fall upon him. He threw up his sword arm and struck with all his might, but the boy was too quick for him.

Rodney's weapon came down upon the Tory's head, and at the same time Jack fearlessly seized the bit of the plunging steed.

Capt. Samson let his sword fall, he reeled in the darkish saddle, shot Rodney a savage glance, and lay on the neck of his horse.

The following moment, as the steed stopped, the huge bulk of the Tory captain slipped to the ground and quivered there.

"The end of a brute!" said Jack.

No; it was by no means the end of Capt. Samson.

CHAPTER VI.

ON SECRET SERVICE FOR GREENE.

Upon examination it was discovered that the renowned Capt. Samson was not dead, but unconscious.

The blow delivered by Rodney, while intended to be fatal, had proved but a glancing one, enough, however, to stretch the Tory on the ground and render him *hors de combat* for the time.

He was securely bound when signs of returning consciousness were noticed, and he was carried back to the victorious Americans.

He proved a sulky prisoner; but when he wanted to, he could berate them in vigorous language, which he did not hesitate to do, for he expected no mercy at the patriots' hands.

So bitter had been the partisan warfare in the Carolinas that but little quarter was given; trials, when had, if the enemy was taken in the act, were very brief, and a convenient tree usually bore human fruit.

In this instance there was, of course, a clamor for severe justice in Capt. Samson's case, for he had been taken in the very act of destroying private property, having just burned out a Whig family; but Col. Washington deemed it best to take his prisoner back to Greene's camp, which was done.

Rodney Black received some dark glances from Capt. Samson, who evidently recalled the affair at the forge. He returned the looks with interest, so that there was no love lost between the two.

Samson was placed under guard in the American camp.

He had lost five of his men in the fight at the burning house, while four others had been taken prisoners.

Gen. Greene resolved to prevent the Tory from taking any part in the coming battle, which was near at hand, therefore he kept him bound in a small log hut, within the confines of the camp.

The morning after the night battle Rodney was called into the presence of the American commander.

After praising him for his part in the affray, Gen. Greene asked him if he cared to undertake a secret mission, saying that he could complete his work and return in time to take part in the expected battle at Guildford.

"I am at your service, sir," said the boy. "As a soldier, it is my duty to carry out, so far as I can, the wishes of my commander."

"I desire to secure some information regarding the enlistments of Tories in Cornwallis' army. It is said that they are flocking to his standard in the vicinity of Rocky Fork, and, I believe, you are familiar with the ground."

"I came from that region, sir."

"And that is why I think you are the proper person to send back there."

"I am ready to go, your excellency."

Gen. Greene then proceeded and gave Rodney his instructions, telling him that his commission required a good deal of secrecy, that he would be expected to get at the facts in the case, using his own means for doing so.

It was a service which the boy partisan did not think of when he enlisted under Greene's banners.

He knew the fate of spies when captured; but as he was going back to his own stamping ground he felt sure that he would be able to succeed.

That same night he set out.

This time he was going alone, as Jack was to remain in camp and keep an eye on Capt. Samson.

The ride to Rocky Fork was without particular incident.

When Rodney came in sight of the old forge it was dark, but the outlines of the shop rose between him and the brilliant stars.

There hung over the place a stillness which seemed ghostly.

Back of the smithy stood the little home of old Jackson and Dora, his niece, and one of Rodney's best friends.

The boy drew near and halted in front of the shop.

Spring had come again, and the trees had put forth in full leaf and the air was invigorating.

Rodney was on the eve of moving on when a low hum of voices came to his ear.

The old smithy was occupied!

As he bent forward he became sure of this. There were men in the shop.

Perhaps old Jackson was holding a meeting with some of the Whigs of the neighborhood, for he knew the old man's sentiments.

"Swear for the king—forever!" said a low voice, which reached the ears of the alert boy.

"We swear!"

The answer was chorused by a number of men, and this startled the boy.

When had old Jackson turned Tory? What had happened to cause him to desert the cause of liberty?

Rodney, with one hand on the butt of his pistol, leaned nearer still, for he now knew he was on dangerous ground, and not a word escaped him.

The secret conclave in the smithy must be probed to the bottom, for here was the very information Gen. Greene wanted.

"We are four and twenty now," continued the voice, which had administered the oath of allegiance. "By to-morrow night there will be others. What say you, Mr. Jeffrys, to a raid before you go to join our friends?"

"It might be a good idea to give this Whig nest a good cleaning out," replied a voice, which Rodney at once recognized as belonging to Red Dan.

"Then we will."

"Confound it! I want the matter attended to better than the other party did. They let the old Whig Callaway slip through their fingers."

"They couldn't help it, if my information is correct, Brother Jeffrys. You see, Black Gorman came down upon them like death upon the Persians, and they had to release their captives. But we will take care of them this time."

The voices now ceased, and there were signs that the night conclave was breaking up.

Rodney moved on again, and halted under some trees, where he could not be observed.

Presently a number of men glided past his hiding place and vanished.

He counted twenty-four.

When the last figure had disappeared he turned toward the house.

He wondered if old Jackson and Dora were aware of the secret gathering.

Tethering his horse in the yard, where the foliage screened him, he crept toward the darkened domicile.

Not a sound broke the strange stillness.

He took good care to make no noise as he crossed

the porch, and in a moment he had tried the latch of the door.

To his surprise it opened without difficulty, and he stood in the darkness, listening with all ears.

He could have heard a pin drop to the floor, everything was so still.

Taking out his flint and tinder box he struck a light, and as the flame leaped up from the tow he held it above his head and took a survey of the little room.

To his utter astonishment it was bare of furniture.

Rodney gazed with increased amazement at the sight before him, and his wonder grew.

What had become of Dora and her uncle?

Shutting the door behind him he resolved to probe the mystery to the bottom, for he did not believe that they would desert their home without some cause.

He proceeded to another room—there were but two on the ground floor—but found it as bare as the one just inspected.

The Jacksons were surely gone.

Then the boy partisan found the narrow stairway which led to the cramped garret overhead.

He crept up the rickety stairs with the ever ready pistol in his grasp, and at the topmost step halted and listened.

Even the darkness told him that the loft was as deserted as the lower part of the house; but in order

to make sure he was about to resort to his tinder box again when a sound like a groan fell upon his ears.

The boy fell back and raised the weapon.

He tried to estimate from what particular corner of the attic the sound had emanated, but this he was unable to do.

"Merciful heavens! must I die here?"

Rodney started to his feet with a cry.

It was a female's voice, and it sent a thrill through every fiber of his frame.

He struck a light as soon as possible and advanced.

In a moment, as it seemed, the light penetrated the darkest corners of the hole, and then another exclamation welled from Rodney's throat.

Lying on the bare floor, with her hands bound on her back and her ankles lashed together, lay Dora, the blacksmith's niece.

Her face was colorless, and her eyes looked like globes of pain in the glare of the boy's improvised torch.

"Is it you—you, Rodney?" cried Dora. "Thank Heaven! you have found me at last!"

The young trooper could not speak for a moment.

"What has happened?" he asked, at length. "In the name of Heaven! what brought about this terrible misfortune?"

At the same time he severed the thongs that held the girl prisoner, and helped her to her feet.

"It was like the bursting of a thunderbolt," said Dora, when she found her tongue, after several efforts. "They came upon us last night. They were masked, and rode horses. They captured both of us, carried away the forge tools, bound me and left me where you have found me."

"And your uncle?"

"I know nothing about him. I suppose they must have dealt severely with him, for he struck their leader with the sledge."

"But the furniture?"

"Oh, they burned that in the yard."

"The miscreants!"

"They even fired the house; but a gust of wind and rain extinguished that in time to save my life."

"And you have been here ever since last night?"

"Ever since the miscreants went away."

"Who led them, Dora?"

"I cannot say; they were masked, as I told you; but I thought I recognized a certain voice."

"Capt. Samson's."

"No; Red Dan Jeffrys'."

"I do not doubt it, for that young scamp is about to join Tarleton. I discovered that much before I found you. You cannot remain here!"

"I dare not. I——"

"You have friends farther down the creek. You

might find an asylum in the home of Mistress Callaway if you wished to go thither."

Dora seemed to shrink from Rodney at these words.

"What! Alice Callaway take into her home the niece of a blacksmith?" she exclaimed.

"She is a young lady with a kind heart, Dora. Besides, both she and her father are true to our cause. They have suffered at the hands of the Tories and, therefore, would naturally feel for you."

"But my uncle? If I could be sure of his fate——"

"I fear the worst, of course; but we will hope for the best. A day of vengeance is waiting for men like Red Dan and Capt. Samson. I have had the pleasure of meeting the latter villain since quitting Rocky Fork. I am now doing service for Gen. Greene."

"Why are you not with him?"

"He gave me a commission, which brings me back to this region. If you will go to Callaway Manor I will see that you get there. You can ride behind me——"

"There seems no other asylum; but it is not very near," broke in Dora.

"My horse is fleet. We will soon cover the distance."

Dora made ready to accompany Rodney to Callaway Manor, and they glided down the stairs.

The tinder box was not needed now.

In a few moments they were at the door, when

heavy footsteps sounded on the porch and the pair drew back.

The door opened and some one came inside.

"I guess the bird has had her wings folded long enough to listen to me now," said a voice, in the almost palpable darkness. "I'll play lover before I take up the sword in earnest; and the old man with the sledge isn't here to defend his kith and kin."

Dora almost betrayed her presence with a cry, and as the unseen moved toward the stairs she clutched Rodney's arm and whispered at his ear:

"Red Dan!"

CHAPTER VII.

HANGMAN'S OAK.

The thought of Red Dan being so near stirred Rodney's blood till it tingled his finger ends.

This was an adventure he had not taken into consideration, but he was ready for it, nevertheless. The thought of the indignities suffered by Dora and her uncle was enough to fire the demand for vengeance, and he doubted not from what he had heard at the old forge that Red Dan had had a hand in the infamous game.

So, surrounded by darkness, the pair heard footsteps move toward the stairway, and presently the door leading to the steps opened.

They knew that in a little while the man, whether he was Red Dan or not, would discover the absence of the prisoner of the garret, and that he would come back in a fury.

All this happened just as they imagined, for in a short time loud oaths were heard overhead, heavy feet crossed the floor and then came down the stairs.

The door burst open and the invader of the house was again near the couple.

"Some one's found her," they heard him say. "She could not have released herself, for I saw to it that she

was well secured; but somehow or other she is at liberty."

Rodney and Dora had drawn back to the wall, which they hugged in silence, while they listened to the outbursts of passion from the lips of the unseen.

"I'll strike a light and see what's here, anyhow," he went on. "Maybe the boys overlooked something. I am of a mind to set fire to the whole nest."

Dora felt Rodney's hand leave her wrist at this threat.

The following moment she saw the sparks that flew from the unknown's flint and then, as a little flame leaped up from the ready tow, she witnessed a spring on Rodney's part.

The young patriot went across the space that separated him from the firemaker like a missile hurled from a catapult.

There was a cry, and two persons fell to the floor, and the burning tow became scattered.

Rodney had not miscalculated the distance, nor the strength of his adversary.

He had the advantage of taking him unawares, but for all this he instantly discovered that he had an agile foe to deal with, for a pair of lusty arms were wrapped round him and he was pressed downward and against the body of his enemy.

Not far away the bit of tow was blazing well, and

Dora, springing forward, picked it up and held it over the struggling combatants on the floor.

By the aid of its light Rodney was enabled to see the face of his antagonist.

He was Dan Jeffrys of Jeffry Manor sure enough.

Almost at the same time Dan recognized his enemy, for he had seen Rodney at the forge; indeed, the young Whig had on several occasions assisted in the shoeing of his horse.

Dora threw down the burning tow when she had taken in the situation, and struck Dan's wrists with a stick which happened to be at hand.

This caused the young Tory to loosen his clasp above Rodney's back, and the boy patriot took advantage of this assistance.

In another minute his hands had been transferred to Mr. Dan's throat, and as they tightened there the Tory gasped.

Tighter and tighter grew the boy's grip.

Dora, to assist him, stood resolutely on one of Dan's arms, nor could he shake her off.

In time the young spy was sure to conquer, and at last he found that the victory was won.

He had choked Red Dan into insensibility.

"Now," he said, rising and throwing a look of triumph into the young girl's face, "we have the young rascal at our mercy. What shall we do with him?"

"The secret of my uncle's fate must belong to him,"

said the girl. "He should first of all be compelled to reveal it."

"That he shall. But we must secure him first."

Red Dan was bound with ropes, which were found in the old closet, near at hand, and then the young captors revived him with the application of water.

A bunch of tow burning in a tin dish on the floor lighted the apartment, and when Dan came back to consciousness he tugged at his bonds and then gave over.

"What did you do with Uncle Jackson last night?" queried Dora, bending forward and fixing her gaze on the young Tory.

"Last night?"

"When you and your friends committed your depredations. You carried him away with you."

"You're pretty bold, my young miss. Do you take me for a night robber?"

"I take you for just what you are, Mr. Jeffrys," was the quick reply. "I recognized your voice last night, and it was at your instigation that I was bound and left in this plundered house."

"And so you would like to know what became of your relative?"

"You know."

"I'll tell you on one condition."

"Pray what is that?"

"Then I am to be released and——"

"And permitted to escape unpunished from the house?" put in Rodney.

"Exactly, young sir."

The boy Whig glanced at Dora, who remained silent and did not respond even by gesture or look.

Red Dan wanted to make his own terms, and the terms he chose to make would, of course, be very advantageous to himself.

Rodney was almost as deeply interested in the fate of the old blacksmith as was the fair girl at his side, but he believed that he could have guessed it.

However, he thought he would meet Red Dan again and under other circumstances, since he was about to join Cornwallis, therefore he argued that he could afford to be lenient in return for information concerning old Jackson's fate.

"We accept," he said to their prisoner.

"Cut my bonds, then."

"No, sir; not until you have revealed the secret of Jackson's fate. I give you my word, Dan Jeffrys, that you shall be free the moment you have told the truth."

Jeffrys winced at this, and set his teeth hard.

"Very well," said he; "the old blacksmith was taken from the shop and pulled up."

There was no contrition in the voice, no pity for the old man whose terrible fate had just been revealed.

"You did not try to save him?" cried Dora.

"I put in my protest, Mistress Dora; but, you see, he struck our leader with the sledge, and they were determined on revenge."

"Whither did they take him?"

"To the big oak at the forks of the road, where the creek bends. You must know where it is."

"I know."

"And they hanged him?"

"I suppose so. I did not accompany them; but they told me afterward that they pulled him up to a limb and left him there."

"The soulless miscreants!" exclaimed the young girl.

The next moment Rodney's knife severed Dan's bonds and that young worthy rose to his feet.

"Well, you've kept your promise," he growled, glaring at Greene's young recruit. "I hope we may meet again under other circumstances."

"I reciprocate that feeling," was the prompt reply. "As I hear you are going to Cornwallis, I am pretty sure we will meet, provided you stand fire!"

There was a good deal of sarcasm in Rodney's last words, which Jeffrys noticed, but without remark.

He was glad to find himself free from bondage, and without replying he strode to the door.

"Good-by!" he cried, in a hiss as he jerked the portal open and turned on the threshold, facing the young pair in the house. "If you two birds expect to wear all

your feathers at the close of the war you reckon without your host."

"What's that, you miserable Tory?"

Rodney, with flashing eyes, sprang toward the speaker, but the hand of Dora Jackson held him back.

"You heard me," repeated Red Dan. "Of course I'm going to Cornwallis. And woe to you if your head gets in the way of my sword!"

He was gone when Rodney broke from Dora's grasp and reached the porch.

He saw him riding away on Black Betty, the hoofs of the mare making music in the road as her shoes struck the flinty stones.

"Come now," said Rodney to his companion; "we are rid of Master Jeffrys and can ride to Callaway Manor."

"To the other place first," said the girl.

"The oak by the creek, you mean?"

"Yes; we can at least give my uncle burial, for these minions of the king did nothing of the kind."

Rodney bowed acquiescence, and the pair emerged from the house.

The boy partisan helped Dora to a seat on the horse behind him and rode away.

The place designated by Red Dan as the spot where the execution of old Jackson, the blacksmith, had taken place was more than a mile from the smithy.

The road wound to it and near by ran the purling

stream, fringed here and there with the lordliest trees in all that section.

The pair spoke but little during the ride. Dora's heart was filled with sadness, and she brooded over the dark vengeance of the Tory band, and thought of the work her hands would have to perform yet that night.

"Here we are," spoke Rodney, at length, as he reined in the horse. "This is the big oak, Dora."

The young girl turned and looked with bated breath, taking in the scene about her.

"I see nothing," she said, at last.

The boy patriot urged his horse forward and pulled up again.

"Look! Here is a bit of rope dangling from a limb; but I can see nothing of the victim of Tory fury."

"Perchance some friendly hands cut him down and gave him Christian burial."

"All of which may be true. But there's something fluttering from the tree itself."

"Seems like a bit of paper."

Rodney reached out a hand and tore the object from the tree trunk.

Then he urged the horse from under the big oak and into the light, for the moon, riding now through the cloudless heavens, flooded the spot with her silvery effulgence.

"What is on the paper?" cried Dora, with unsup-

pressed eagerness, while Rodney bent forward to decipher the scrawl which had already caught his eye.

"It is a poor scrawl," replied the boy, without looking up. "It seems to have been written with a bit of sharpened lead. I'll master it presently, I hope."

Dora waited with impatience.

"I have it at last. Your uncle escaped the death prepared for him by the Tories."

"Escaped the noose?"

"I can't say as to that. But listen. This is what the paper says: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Old Jackson, deprived of all that was dear to him, has drawn his sword for freedom, and woe to the villains who tried to strangle him! The day of settlement is not far away. Vengeance! May we meet in battle; but wherever we meet, last night's work shall be paid for. JACKSON.'"

Dora uttered a cry of relief when Rodney finished reading.

"Surely, some one cut him down before life was extinct," she exclaimed. "But why did he not return to the forge? That is something I cannot understand. But all will be explained later on."

"Let us hope so. Now for Callaway Manor, and, after seeing you safe there, I must return with my report to Gen. Greene."

The horse was guided from the scene of more than

one dark deed during the Revolution, and cantered down the river road with his double burden.

Rodney recalled his adventure during the last few hours, and yearned for the time when he should meet the redcoats in a pitched battle.

That time was close at hand, for both Cornwallis and Greene had stripped for the conflict.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUILDFORD.

True to Rodney's predictions, Dora found an asylum at Callaway Manor.

She was welcomed by Mistress Alice who, as the reader knows, had already suffered at the hands of the Tories, and the boy patriot, after seeing her snugly ensconced there, bade the girls good-by and set out on his return to the army.

He had obtained some information of the kind wanted by Gen. Greene, and flattered himself that he would reach the army in time to take part in the coming battle.

The American general had chosen Guildford for his battleground.

There he expected to measure strength with Cornwallis, his inveterate foe and relentless pursuer.

He had halted in his retreat across the Carolinas at the Iron Works on the Haw to wait for reinforcements.

These came at last, and he found himself at the head of five thousand five hundred men, the largest number ever mustered at one time under his banners.

His long retreat had been glorious.

Cornwallis thought many times that he had the

American army in a net from which there was no escape, but each time had the masterful Greene slipped through his fingers.

While Greene's army was numerically stronger than that of his adversary, he could scarcely hope for success.

Cornwallis' men were trained veterans, who had seen service in Europe; the greater part of Greene's force was a mere militia rabble.

On the 14th of March, 1781, the American army halted at Guildford.

A single building, called by courtesy a courthouse, crowned a hill in the midst of a clearing.

The spot was lonely and forsaken, no other house being in sight, and everywhere stretched a boundless forest, broken here and there by little patches of cultivated land.

On the morning of the 15th Greene drew up his little army in three lines.

He placed the North Carolina militia along a stone fence facing a cornfield.

Fifty yards behind them lay the Virginia recruits under Stevens and Lawson.

Four hundred yards behind these stood the veteran Continentals, men of many a bloody affray, led by Greene himself.

Lee's Legion covered the right flank of the little

army, while Washington's heavy dragoons, with whom Rodney and Jack served, protected the left.

Such was the order of battle.

It was most admirable.

If the militia could be held to their work there were hopes for Greene, otherwise there were none.

It was an ideal day.

Birds sang in the trees and the sky was as soft as the blue vault of summer.

When Rodney reached the camp, just before the march to the battlefield, Jack was the first to impart some important information.

Capt. Samson had effected his escape the night before.

It was supposed that some Tory spy, who had entered the camp, had assisted him to freedom, for the guard on the outside of the hut where the captain was confined had been strangled into insensibility, and investigation proved that the blackbird was gone.

This did not trouble the boy partisan very much, for he felt that Capt. Samson had rejoined the remnant of his band, and he hoped that they would take part in the coming battle, where they could be ridden down by Washington's dragoons.

"We'll clip his feathers good the next time, never fear," said Rodney to Jack. "This rascal has but a breathing spell, and his career is very apt to end at the point of a sword or the twist of a rope."

"Really, I hope so. And you say that Red Dan is now with Tarleton?"

"He undoubtedly is."

"That's good! Another chance to settle some old scores."

This conversation took place on the battle line, in the glorious beams of the sun, while the little army waited for the enemy.

Higher and higher rose the god of day, illuminating the east, but Cornwallis came not.

Noon came, and the air was not stirred by the crash of the furious legions.

At last, by one o'clock, the sound of drums assailed the ears of the colonists.

The foe was at hand!

In another moment the earl threw forward his artillery and opened on the foremost line of the Americans, and, under cover of the dense smoke, pushed his infantry into the cornfield facing the North Carolinians.

Now was the time for the militia of the old North State to cover themselves with glory; but it was not to be.

Behind the stone fence the patriots watched the redcoats as they formed for the charge, they looked upon the long line of glittering steel and saw the bayonets lowered for the work of death.

Suddenly, with deafening shouts, the British line

dashed forward, and without firing a shot, the North Carolinians turned and ran like a pack of frightened sheep.

Gen. Greene had not expected them to withstand the charge of Europe's veteran legions; but he did hope that they would pour at least three or four rounds into the scarlet coats, but not a round did they fire.

It was shameful.

Vainly did the intrepid Lee dash among them with drawn saber, threatening to cut the cowards down, but it had no effect; they ran on with the exulting foe thundering behind them.

The Virginians stood firm.

They met the enemy with a deadly volley, and the ground was flecked with scarlet uniforms.

Bravely did they stand, till they were overpowered. They did all that men could do, but, when crushed by the weight of numbers, they turned and fled.

Then the grand old Continental line threw itself forward.

It sprang up from the ground, and in another moment was upon the victorious British.

With lowered bayonets the Americans flung themselves upon Cornwallis' veterans, broke through their ranks with a fury that could not be checked, and had the battle almost won.

But at every step they were met by hundreds of redcoats, and the battle became a carnage.

Meanwhile, our young heroes had patiently bided their time.

They had been told that Gen. Greene always reserved Washington and his cavalry for the critical moment, and at last it came.

The Marylanders, fighting like Spartans, were about to be crushed by the foe.

They could hold the thin line but a little while.

Suddenly the bugles sounded loud and clear.

Sabers had been drawn and pistols loosened in the holsters.

"We're in for it now!" said Jack to Rodney.

"At last, thank fortune!"

Onward went the troopers, swinging straight upon the British line that was pressing the Continentals to the last extremity.

Almost before one could breathe a second time the horsemen were upon the infantry.

It was like the impact of a thunderbolt.

"Be steady and firm!" cried the heroic Stuart, who commanded the English. "Don't let the rebel horsemen drive you back."

Rodney and Jack kept as close together as possible.

They saw Washington riding at the head of his legion like a real god of battle, his saber swinging round his head and his whole soul in the fray.

The clash was terrible. In vain did the British col-

umn present their bayonets to the maddened riders, they were dashed aside and the ranks forced.

Nothing could stay the advance of those sabering heroes of the South.

"That officer yonder! Come!" cried Jack, in the excitement of the moment. "They are rallying round the colors. Let us take them!"

He turned slightly to the left without looking for Rodney, but Rodney had heard and was close behind him.

Jack had already cut one soldier down, and there were drops of red on his saber.

In a moment they were upon the little group of twenty men who had rallied round the colors.

They presented their warlike front to the troopers, and stood their ground like heroes.

Had the boy patriots tried to check their steeds it is doubtful if they could have succeeded before they were upon the group.

"The flag! the flag!" they both shouted in unison.

The officer who clung to the flagstaff retreated a step and looked defiance at the speakers.

Others were rushing to the rescue, and the boys were liable to be surrounded.

Jack struck at the officer, but his saber was knocked aside by a giant grenadier, who parried the stroke with his musket, and the boy was almost thrown from the saddle.

"The flag! We must have the colors!" exclaimed Rodney.

He was upon the little group, his horse plunging right among them, while his blade knocked the British captain's hat flying from his head.

In another moment he had seized the flagstaff and had wrenched it by main force from the hands that would have preserved it from capture.

It was a glorious moment for the boys of Carolina.

As they wheeled and rode back they were met by a volley of grape and cannister, for Cornwallis, seeing that in order to save his guards from annihilation he must shoot into friend and foe alike, so intermingled were they, had brought up his artillery, and was strewing the ground with humanity.

The terrible volleys sent from the brass guns turned the tide of battle.

The brave troopers were forced back, the American infantry reeled from the shock, and the iron balls continued to plow through their ranks like engines of destruction.

A moment since the field of Guildford was won, now it was irretrievably lost.

Such is the fate of war.

Rodney and Jack were borne back on the tide of battle.

The former still clung to the captured colors, while Jack held in his hand a colonel's sword.

Lee and Campbell on the left still maintained the fight, but they could not hold out long.

Where Washington's troopers had ridden the ground was literally covered with redcoats.

For hours the battle had raged among the sturdy trees. and the ground had shaken with the tread of the stubborn legions.

The sun sank into a mass of clouds, and the only noises that at last came from the field were the cries of the wounded.

The battle of Guildford was over.

Gen. Greene reluctantly gave the order to retreat, placing his brave Virginians as a rear guard.

Cornwallis advanced upon this line, hoping to break it; but the Virginians received the victors with such a galling fire that they fell back in disorder.

They did not try it again, for other engagements had told the British commander that Greene was most dangerous when whipped.

The little army fell back to its old encampments at Reedy Fork.

It had been defeated; but the enemy had been terribly punished.

Six hundred redcoats lay on the grass and leaves about Guildford Courthouse.

Well might Fox say on the floor of Parliament, when the news of this battle reached England:

"Another such victory will ruin the British army."

"Two of my bravest!" said Gen. Greene, when Jack and Rodney rode up to his tent, one with the captured colors and the other bearing the handsome sword he had captured in fair fight. "Had I had heroes like you at the stone fence to-day we would have gained a brilliant victory."

"But the enemy has been terribly punished, general," said Rodney. "He doesn't even growl."

"No; we pulled too many of his teeth; he cannot growl."

The boys rode back, ready for the next adventure, which was to be of a different nature, and as exciting as the battle. They felt that it was something to serve under the banners of the gallant Greene.

CHAPTER IX.

AN INTERRUPTED WELCOME.

After his defeat at Guildford, Gen. Greene resolved to carry the war into South Carolina.

The British followed, but with caution, for it was like trailing a wounded lion, which growls all the time and is likely to turn upon his hunters.

Greene at times turned on his pursuers and inflicted heavy damage.

Going back into South Carolina pleased Rodney and Jack.

They would soon reach ground familiar to them both, and they hoped to pay off some old scores with the Tories.

Besides this, it would permit them to be near Callaway Manor, where both Dora and Alice were, and they feared that the two girls would need at times the strength of their protecting arms.

It had not been their fortune to encounter Capt. Samson or Red Dan at Guildford, for they did not come in contact with Tarleton's horse; but now that they were riding south they felt assured that they would soon meet these two worthies again.

Callaway Manor was a large estate, which had been in possession of the house many years.

Its former owners had beautified it until it was one of the fairest plantations in the Palmetto State, the old manor house standing on a rise back of a grove of stately trees, whose shade lent a cooling freshness to the landscape.

Being near it one dusk Rodney proposed to his friend and companion a ride to the place, and in a short time they dismounted in front of the long vine-covered porch, which was supported by enormous columns.

A faithful slave first discovered them, and their arrival was the signal for great rejoicing.

They were escorted into the great parlor, where they found the master of the place ready to greet them.

The two girls, their eyes gleaming with pleasure, added zest to the welcome, and in a little while a sumptuous repast was set before the young troopers.

The boys had much to tell, the marches with Greene, the fierce fight at Guildford, in which they had taken such a prominent part, the stubborn retreat into South Carolina, and finally the hopes of soon seeing the end of the war with the establishment of a new nation devoted to freedom in North America.

In the midst of Rodney's recital of an incident of the retreat a darky bounded into the dining room, his eyes rolling in fright and his breath no longer at his command.

"De—Tories! dey am comin' down de road!" he

finally made out to say. "Dey am a thousand strong, an' dey come fo' the young dragoons!"

In an instant everyone left the table, and the boys, seizing their weapons, bolted for the door.

The night had not fairly settled over the scene, for objects were discernible some distance away.

One glance was enough.

The road leading past the house and between it and the first line of trees, seemed full of men.

The jingle of warlike weapons was distinctly heard, and after a look the door was closed.

"Is it Tarleton?" asked Thomas Callaway.

"I think not. Col. Tarleton can hardly be in this neighborhood just now. It may be a band of Tories led by some such fellow as Capt. Samson——"

"Or Red Dan."

"We shall soon see."

Almost before the last words had left Rodney's lips the band halted in front of the mansion and a part of it, separating, rode round it, forming in a moment a cordon of living humanity.

Silence reigned within the manor house.

"Come out and surrender!" called a loud voice. "We have you all in a trap. Come out or take the consequences!"

Before he could be restrained, Thomas Callaway opened the door and stepped bodly upon the porch.

At sight of him a shout of derision cleft the air.

"The old lion himself!" laughed the leader of the Tories. "Where are the cubs?"

"What is wanted?"

"We want the young rebels whom you harbor, that's what we're here for."

"You mean——"

"Come! No words spoken for time! We'll not put up with delay. Trot out the rebel whelps, I say!"

"You must be mistaken. You——"

"We trailed them here, and they're inside," was the unceremonious interruption.

"Men, I trust you won't inflict any indignities upon the young ladies under my care."

"We won't do more than look at the beauties perhaps, but we want the rebel cubs."

Rodney and Jack quivered with indignation behind the heavy oaken door.

"Will you surrender them?" demanded the heavily bearded leader of the forayers. "We can't remain here all night in a fruitless parley."

Callaway's blood boiled in his veins.

"Then," he cried, "if you want the guests of Callaway Manor you must come and take them!"

This defiance sent a cry heavenward from the throats of the men in the road.

"And we'll take 'em, too!"

The master of the manor turned and re-entered the mansion.

As the door closed behind him a heavy plank shot into its place, and the portal was barricaded against the enemy.

A few moments of most painful silence followed this act, and then the troopers outside sent up a chorus of maddening yells.

"You will defy the king, eh?" they cried.

Silence, which meant "yes," was the only reply.

Those inside heard a command as it was spoken by the leader of the Tory band, and all withdrew a short distance.

Suddenly the stillness outside was broken by a volley, and bullets hurtled through the shutters, to strike the wall beyond with dismal thuds.

The girls stood erect, refusing to retire to a place of safety, and Thomas Callaway, who had vanished for a moment, came back with an armload of loaded muskets.

"We are prepared for a pretty good siege, you see," he said, with a smile to the two boys. "They will have some sport taking Fort Callaway, I'm thinking."

In a little while the demand for surrender was repeated, but it met with a stern refusal.

"How many are out there?" queried Jack.

"I think I counted twenty-six in front of the house, but there are others behind it."

"And we are five."

"Do you want to be smoked out?"

This was the usual Tory threat, for men of Capt. Samson's ilk did not hesitate to apply the torch, no matter if women and children were in jeopardy.

"Cowards, do you worst!" answered Mr. Callaway, with his lips at the door. "We don't expect mercy from a band of Tory cutthroats!"

Fearful that the fire, if started at all, would begin in the rear of the house among the smaller buildings, Rodney ran through the room and sought a window in the kitchen.

Halting there, rifle in hand, he looked out upon the gathering shadows.

A man was creeping toward the manor house like an Indian.

He bellied the ground like a panther, wriggling his way forward through the low bushes.

Rodney raised the lower sash without noise and waited.

Nearer and nearer came the man.

When near the house he drew something from his bosom and struck his flint.

A little spark no larger than a pea leaped up, then the tow caught.

The hand of the boy ranger clutched the gun more firmly.

He rested it upon the sash, and, taking aim at the crouching figure, touched the trigger.

The report was followed by a cry, and the man leaped into the air and fell among the bushes.

"One Tory less, I trust," said Rodney, as he ran back to report his success.

The shot was followed by a number of revengeful cries, and another volley was poured through the front windows, fortunately inflicting no injuries on the besieged.

"What's that?" exclaimed Jack, as the sound of an ax reverberated through the manor.

"They are felling one of the younger trees."

"For a battering ram. They will storm the door!"

Thomas Callaway set his teeth hard, but did not speak.

He knew that the door, despite the barricade, could not long resist a battering ram in the hands of ten or twenty determined men.

"It is a fight to the finish," he said at last, as he looked at the boys. "Callaway Manor shall not be surrendered so long as its master lives."

"That's right; and you will find us with you to the bitter end," was the response.

One of the girls, who had been stationed at the kitchen window, reported that everything was quiet in that direction.

The summary death of the incendiary seemed to have quieted the marauders on that side of the house.

The making of the battering ram went on.

Each blow of the ax seemed to shorten the doom of the devoted defenders of the manor.

At last the strokes ceased.

The terrible weapon was finished.

"Now, for the last time, we demand your surrender," came from without.

"Clearly that was Capt. Samson's voice," said Rodney.

"Yes; I am Capt. Samson. I am the man who wants to settle with you young rebel cubs. For the last time, I say, will you surrender?"

"For the last time, no!"

Capt. Samson withdrew.

"It will come now," said Thomas Callaway, as he picked up one of the muskets and made ready for a stubborn defense.

Sure enough, it did come, for all at once there came to the alert ears of the besieged the tramping of many feet on the porch and a blow that seemed to twist the door on its heavy hinges.

But the barricade did not yield.

Three rifles were thrust through openings in the shutters and flashed in the faces of the men on the porch.

There were cries of mortal pain, horrible curses and imprecations of all kinds.

The volley had told.

Then came a shuffling of feet on the porch and next

another rush, the long timber crashing against the door and knocking one of the irons that held the barricade to the floor.

The critical moment had arrived.

All saw that another attack would send the door from its hinges, and that the house would swarm with the enemy.

Yet there was no sign of yielding.

"Quick!" shouted Thomas Callaway, at the top of his voice, "the powder! Spring the mine, and let all, friend, and foe, perish together!"

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRE IN THE REAR.

The command which the stern old Whig uttered with such emphasis was intended to convey the impression to the enemy outside that the house, or at least a portion of it, had been undermined for a dire emergency, and that a spark would send it hurtling into the air, burying in its ruins friend and foe alike.

A startling silence followed the words.

Then there was a hasty scrambling from the porch, the Tories in their haste fairly tumbling over one another in their eagerness to escape the peril they thought awaited them.

"They're gone!" exclaimed Miss Alice. "The threat shows that a Tory is, after all, afraid of gunpowder."

A smile wreathed the lips of the old master of the manor.

"Now for a breathing spell," said he. "We can repair the damage to the door."

The missing staple was found on the floor and driven into a new place in the heavy oaken frame, the barricade was replaced, and the door made as stout as possible.

The two boys knew that their horses had fallen into Capt. Samson's possession; but they were still uncap-

tured, and hoped to give the murderous band the best fight possible.

For some little time silence reigned around the manor house.

"If we were outside with some of the legion there would be a great scampering of Tories," said Rodney.

"As you say that Lee is not far away, it is possible that he may have heard the firing and will come to our rescue."

"He will surely ride this way if the firing has reached his ears, Mistress Alice."

"Let us hope that it has."

By this time there seemed to be a reaction of sentiment on the foe's part.

They appeared to have seen through the ruse which had chased them back, and now they came on again.

"Will you not surrender and spare the effusion of blood?" asked Capt. Samson.

"Why surrender to you?" was the response.

"Because you are greatly outnumbered."

"Callaway Manor is a fort that will be defended to the last extremity!"

"Then the mercy you may get by submitting may not be tendered at all."

"Mercy is not expected."

"Just as you will," growled the Tory captain.

"I think if we were only outside we could soon put a different face on affairs," whispered Rodney, at this

juncture. "The house is surely watched on all sides, and it might be difficult to get through the enemy's lines, but——"

"Very well—if you are willing to try your stratagem you shall have a chance," responded Thomas Callaway. "There is the underground passage——"

"Is there such a thing connected with the manor?"

"There is; but it has not been used during the war that I know of."

"Where is it?"

"Alice will show you."

The young girl turned away and left the room, followed by the two boys.

Mr. Callaway and Dora were left to hold the foe at bay in a parley as long as possible.

Alice Callaway descended steps into the cellar, carrying a light in her hand.

Traversing the wine vaults, she came to a door set in the wall.

"There is the passage," said she. "It terminates underneath the spring house, where there is a door in the floor. The passageway is very ancient, for it was there long before father was born, having been built, it is supposed, by old Audran Callaway, who fought under Cromwell. He may have built it for safety from the Indians, but of that we are not certain."

Rodney caught hold of the iron ring which was set

in the door of the passageway and, by main strength, pulled it open.

A dark, cavernous opening yawned in his face.

Alice held the light, so that its rays revealed a flight of steps, which seemed to lead into the bowels of the earth, but which, in fact, did not lead very far down.

"Now, bring three or four muskets hither, Jack," said the boy blacksmith. "We will treat these Tories to a fire in the rear, something they have never yet been known to stand."

Jack bounded back to the room where Mr. Callaway and Dora stood, and returned with four guns.

"You will shut the door behind us," Rodney said to Alice. "We will find the door at the other end of the tunnel. Keep up a stout heart, and if we do not outwit Capt. Samson and his band it will not be our fault."

The boy partisans now plunged into the tunnel, and Alice pushed the heavy door back to its place.

Then she listened a while and heard faint sounds beyond the portal, which told her that the daring young Whigs were gliding through the darkness underground, bent on the stratagem they had in view.

"It's as dark as Egypt in here," said Rodney, as he guided himself by keeping a hand on the cold wall.

"Darker even than that," was the reply behind him.

"Never mind, we must play our hand out. Remember, that we are dealing with Capt. Samson."

"Just as if I could forget it for a moment."

Down the tunnel the boys made their way, keeping as close together as possible, and each bore his share of the muskets and extra ammunition.

The old passage seemed endless.

At last, however, they reached the end of the tunnel, for they were stopped by a solid wall.

"We must be underneath the spring house."

"It would seem so, for this is the end of the tunnel."

Rodney felt overhead and moved his hand over a great flat stone.

"I've found the trap," he whispered to his companion.

"That's good luck."

"Now, with me, place your shoulders against the stone and we will see if we can raise it."

The boys drew close together, and placing their strong shoulders against the stone above them, exerted all their strength and found that it moved.

Another trial and it fell backward, and they drew themselves out of the pit.

The muskets were pulled out after them, and they stood free again.

The old spring house was about two hundred yards from the manor house, and stood among a lot of trees.

The boys did not take time to inspect their surroundings.

As they hastened toward Callaway Manor they sud-

denly stopped, for there were shouts of triumph in that direction.

"The demons have fired the house! Look, Jack!"

This seemed true, for a tongue of flame had leaped heavenward, and as it gathered in volume the boys stood transfixed with horror, as it seemed.

"The brutes!" hissed Jack. "Come, we may not be too late."

They sprang forward with the agility of young panthers, and soon gained a place in the enemy's rear.

"Now let them have it!" said Rodney. "Fire the muskets as rapidly as possible, and I will do the rest."

The boys discharged the muskets one after the other, and Rodney's voice was heard above the din:

"Forward, Virginians! No mercy to the Tories of the Carolinas! America forever!"

The effect was electrical.

In a moment there were signs of skurrying in front of the manor house, and men were heard flying in all directions.

A fire in the rear was something the Tories of the Revolution could not stand.

"Forward! Death to the villains of the South!" Rodney continued to cry out.

Some more shots were fired from the muskets, and as the boys dashed forward they found no one to oppose them.

There still rung in their ears sounds of flight as

Capt. Samson and his band urged their horses from the scene of the unexpected attack.

The boys were on the porch in a little while.

"Look! The door is beaten in!" exclaimed Jack. "Can it be that the enemy has accomplished his purpose?"

They stopped a second at the door, which swung brokenly from its hinges, while behind the house the flames were creeping upward in their eagerness to leave it a heap of ashes.

"Where are you, friends?" cried Rodney, halting in the dark and the silence.

There was no response.

The boys now threw open the doors that led from the room into the chambers, and this let a flood of firelight into the place.

"They are gone! Capt. Samson has captured all!"

It seemed indeed true, for certain signs showed that a desperate struggle had taken place in the parlor, but Mr. Callaway and the two girls were missing.

"We must have been just a few seconds too late," said Rodney, with a sigh.

"It looks so."

It now became the boys' duty to save the grand old house, and in this they were assisted by some of the slaves, who had returned from hiding from the Tory band. By persistent efforts on the part of all the fire

was subdued, and nothing but a few charred planks showed where it had gnawed its mad way.

Afoot, with their friends in the hands of Capt. Samson, Rodney and Jack felt the sting of rage and keen disappointment.

The slaves told them how the Tories had ridden off when the attack in the rear began, and how they had previously rushed the house, despite the defense put up by those inside.

"They must be followed!" exclaimed Rodney. "Capt. Samson must not boast of his triumph long."

"But the horses?"

Not a horse had been left on the premises by the enemy.

Cupe, the head slave, a giant darky, and one devotedly attached to his master, volunteered to assist the boys in their pursuit; but it was feared that but little headway could be made without horses.

The Tories had taken the road leading across the country, and which, three miles away, struck a river, barely fordable.

Pursuit seemed almost out of the question, but the boys were not to be discouraged.

It was feared that the life of Thomas Callaway was in danger, for he had been such a pronounced enemy of the king, and on several occasions had rendered Marion a good deal of assistance.

This had rendered him a marked man by the British

and Tories, and we have already seen how near death he had been while a prisoner in their hands.

"Horses or no horses, we must follow them!" cried Rodney.

"I am with you, of course, but——"

"Well?"

"Are there no Tory horses near by? Who owns the next plantation, Cupe?"

"Massa Brunix."

"Whig or Tory?"

"Him no say much."

"Then he is not Whig."

"Him keep mighty still dese days."

"Which means that he sympathizes with the king. Has he any horses?"

"De bes' in de deestrick."

"Show us the way to Mr. Brunix's."

Cupe was delighted to do this, for he had no love for the man he had mentioned.

The three reached the Brunix stables in a short run.

They stood well secluded, and the darky led the way to the door.

"If Brunix is Whig, he will have no horses," said Rodney. "If Tory, we will find them in the stables."

It did not take long to open the stable door.

"Horses galore!" exclaimed Jack, who was the first to enter.

"That settles Mr. Brunix's politics," was the reply,

and in a few moments three steeds were saddled and led forth.

The trio mounted and a musket was placed in Cupe's hands.

"Forward!" cried Rodney. "No rest now till we've found Capt. Samson and his band."

The animals, eager to get out of the stables, bounded forward like Roman racers, and the trio soon struck the Tory trail.

"They will make for the ford—the upper one being nearest," remarked Rodney.

"Why not strike across country and make the ford first?"

"That's it."

This was done, and after some hard riding, the pursuers reached the ford. Rodney dismounted and examined the ground.

"I fear we have missed it. No one has been here to-night."

CHAPTER XI.

A SERIOUS TIME FOR RED DAN.

About the hour of the last assault on Callaway Manor by Capt. Samson and his desperate band of Tories, a man raised the flap of Gen. Greene's well-worn tent and entered without ceremony.

The general was alone.

He had given himself little rest since the battle of Guildford, and his men were well spent by the march since their last encounter with the enemy.

As the man made his appearance Gen. Green looked up and seemed to study him for a moment.

"Well, you see, general," cried the swarthy-looking man, "a man can even escape death after they have noosed him."

"I don't quite understand, sir."

"Oh, I am old Jackson, the blacksmith."

"You? I thought——"

"I thought so, too, at one time," interrupted the other, with a grin.

"The report is that they hanged you."

"So they did."

"But you're alive."

"I feel that way, general; really, I do, though there's

a little soreness here," and the speaker put his hand under his chin.

"They swooped down upon me like a pack of eagles," he went on. "They took me completely by surprise, and they wanted me to sharpen some Tory swords, which I would not do."

"You braved them, did you?"

"Yes; I told them the day had gone by when I sharpened swords for the enemies of liberty."

"I admire your pluck, sir."

"It cost me dearly. They destroyed my tools, or carried them off, then they seized my niece, Mistress Dora, and carried me to the big oak near the creek, where they proceeded to make short work of me."

"But failed?"

"It wasn't their fault that they failed. I was swung up to the limb and left there with a Tory rope round my neck. But old Jackson's time hadn't come yet."

"That's good!"

"I was rescued in the nick of time by a negro. I was cut down, after which I left a note of vengeance and warning nailed to the oak. I hope they've seen it."

The old blacksmith's eyes had a baleful glitter.

"I've been back to the house; but I can find nothing of Dora. I suppose they carried her off."

"They left her bound in the house, I believe."

"So you've heard of the raid?"

"I was told by a boy, who belongs to my command,"

answered Greene, and he proceeded and narrated the story which Rodney had imparted to him.

The old man listened attentively.

"There's good stuff in that boy!" he exclaimed, with enthusiasm. "He hasn't handled the sledge for nothing. Give him a chance and he will show the enemies of freedom a thing or two."

"He acquitted him well at Guilford. He captured some colors there."

"Good! Now, general, I am out for revenge."

"You have my best wishes in that direction, I assure you."

"I want first to find Dora, and afterwards to come across the young rascal who led the Tories that night."

"You recognized him? I thought they were all masked?"

"You can't fool me on a voice."

"Then——"

"Their leader was Red Dan Jeffrys."

"A bad young blade, I hear."

"One of the worst ever whelped in South Carolina."

"And you would like to see him?"

"It is my sole wish just now."

The American general seemed to reflect a moment.

"I might gratify your whim under certain conditions."

"What! do you know where he is?"

"He is a prisoner at this hour in my camp."

Old Jackson gave vent to a prolonged whistle.

"He was captured last night inside our lines."

"As a spy?"

"That is to be determined by a court-martial."

"Who caught him, general?"

"Some scouts of Lee's Legion."

"Where is the young wolf?"

"Gen. Lee is guarding him, I believe."

"Might I see him?"

"Under certain circumstances."

"Name them, your excellency."

"You must remember that he is my captive."

"Yes."

"And you are not to injure him while he remains such."

"I want to know what they did with Dora——"

"Oh, she's safe at Callaway Manor."

"Then, I'll want to find out what they did with some important papers I've been treasuring for years."

"You can ask him."

The next moment Greene bent over his little camp table and wrote hurriedly for a short time.

When he finished he handed the paper to Jackson.

"Take this to Lee and he will let you see the prisoner."

The blacksmith took the document and saluted in a rough manner.

As he was about to quit the tent Greene said:

"What are your plans now?"

"I want service under your excellency," was the reply. "I've got an arm that can drive a sword through any British head in the army."

"I don't doubt that, Jackson. We need such men as you, and you may consider yourself one of us."

The old man bowed and smiled.

He disappeared with the permit.

Ten minutes later it was in the hands of Lee.

A soldier was detailed to escort the blacksmith to a little log shanty, before which a soldier paced with a musket on his ragged shoulder.

The door of the hut was secured with a chain and staple, but it was opened to the old man.

A candle was produced by the guard and lighted within the shanty.

As Jackson entered, a man who had been lying on some straw rose and confronted him.

"They've no right to treat me thus," he said, in the voice of a bully.

It was Red Dan, and his appearance had suffered a good deal since his brief imprisonment.

But the moment he looked into Jackson's face he fell back to the wall and stared at him.

"You know me," said the old smith. "A hanged man doesn't always die underneath the limb."

The young Tory was speechless from amazement.

"Oh, I'm no ghost, but flesh and blood," continued

the blacksmith. "You should have remained under the oak and seen your work well done."

"I—I thought we had done it well?"

"Oh, no. You only sowed the seed of vengeance, that's all."

"But why are you here?"

"For a purpose. Now, Mr. Jeffrys, I want to know what you did with the papers in the old chest in the garret?"

"What were they to me?"

"That's not answering my question. They were important to me, as you evidently knew before you swooped down upon the nest. Those very papers were wanted by you, and helped to arm you for your dastardly work."

"And you would like to have them, I suppose?"

"I intend to recover them."

"When?"

"As soon as possible, and at whatever cost. They are documents which prove Dora's claim to a large estate in England. Now, look here, Mr. Jeffrys, you knew that if those papers were out of our hands and in the hands of certain parties across the water she would lose what rightfully belongs to her."

"How could I know that?"

"Your father was possessed of the information, and I hear that you boasted that you would deprive the girl of her rights because she was old Jackson's niece."

Red Dan frowned and walked away.

"Where are those papers?" demanded the old man, clinching his fists.

"Find them!"

"You cowardly wretch, do you want to test my patience?" roared the blacksmith. "I've given my pledge to Gen. Greene not to harm you, because you are an important prisoner, but——"

There was danger in the old Whig's eyes, and that is what frightened the young Tory for a moment.

"But I may break my word with him," finished Jackson. "I want those papers. I intend to have them!"

"Very well. If you will get me out of this snap I will see that you are accommodated."

"That's clever, now, isn't it? You know your precious neck is in peril, and I suppose you would do anything to save it. But I couldn't trust you out of my sight."

"Don't try to if that is your opinion of Dan Jeffrys," was the retort.

"You will not tell me where the documents are?"

"Not without I'm set free."

"They charge you with being inside their lines, and they are going to try you for a spy."

"Well?"

"You know what they did with Major Andre, and this same Gen. Greene is the man who was president of that court-martial."

"I know that."

"He hates spies."

Red Dan made no reply to this, but looked at Jackson from his place against the wall.

"Get me out of this and then the papers will be talked about."

"I can't set you free, and even if I could, do you think for a moment that I have forgotten the scene beneath the big oak?"

"That's pretty hard to forget, I'll admit."

"Especially when my throat is still sore from the choking."

"Then I guess we can't treat," growled Red Dan.

"I guess I'll know before I leave this place what you did with the papers."

"You will, eh?"

The following moment, and before the young Tory could guard against him, Jackson flung himself forward, and, catching the prisoner by the throat, pressed him against the wall.

The door had been closed after his entrance, and the guard, deeming everything safe, had stepped aside a few feet.

The attack was so sudden that Red Dan, finding himself in the clutches of this giant, could not resist.

Jackson seemed to press him into the logs at his back.

"Tell me!" he hissed in Red Dan's ear. "Tell me

where the documents are, or Gen. Greene will never get to string you up."

"I—I——"

"Don't tell me you don't know, for you do. They fell into your hands, for no one else in your band wanted them, or knew of their existence."

The hands seemed to sink deeper and deeper into Red Dan's throat.

"What became of the papers?" demanded Jackson again.

"Release—me—and——"

"You'll tell, eh?" and the great blackish fingers relaxed their hold a little.

"Now, sir, tell the truth."

Red Dan breathed freer.

As he twisted his precious neck half free a loud cry welled from his throat.

"Help! murder! murder!" he yelled.

"Ho! that's your game, is it?" cried Jackson, resuming his terrible grip. "You prefer hanging to telling the truth, I see. Very well, they'll hang a dead man, then."

The rage of the old blacksmith was terrible. He forgot his promise to Greene in his deadly ire, and, pushing Red Dan against the logs again, he buried his fingers once more in his throat.

The guard heard the cry and rushed into the hut.

He seized Jackson's arm and tried to tear loose the hand bent on vengeance.

"You'll kill the prisoner," cried the guard. "He is to be tried as a spy and——"

"There he is; try him, then!" and with this Jackson turned and flung Red Dan at the soldier's feet.

"Curse you, madman! I believe you've killed him," said the guard.

"I hope I have," was the response. "It keeps some others from doing the same."

Jackson strode from the hut while the guard held the light over the blackened face of Red Dan Jeffrys.

Such were the passions of the Revolution.

The blacksmith hurried back to Gen. Greene's tent.

"You saw him, I suppose?" asked the commander, as he recognized his visitor.

"I saw him and left him for dead in the cabin."

"What?"

"I couldn't help it. I've saved your court-martial a job, that's all. I surrender to you, general, to be tried for what I've just done. I hope the young whelp's dead, I do indeed. When you want to try old Jackson you will find him easily. He won't leave the camp," and with this the blacksmith walked away.

CHAPTER XII.

A DEED OF BLOOD.

Capt. Samson and his prisoners had such a good start of the young pursuers that it would require the utmost speed and diligence to overtake them.

The last assault on the manor house had been successful, and after a desperate fight with the inmates, for both Alice and Dora battled to the last against adverse circumstances, they were overcome and fortunately escaped the shots fired into the band by Rodney and Jack, who, as we have seen, delivered their volleys after emerging from the tunnel.

Thomas Callaway was securely bound on a horse while the girls were too closely guarded to think of escaping, which they would not do so long as the old Whig was in the hands of his foes.

They determined to share his fortunes to the last.

The Tories who were killed in the fight at the manor house, along with those who were wounded, were carried off by the retreating band.

It was at first intended to cross the river at the upper ford, but Capt. Samson feared that their pursuers would naturally make for that quarter, so he changed his course and headed for another ford lower down.

Here the band crossed without difficulty and then resumed their journey.

Samson believed that the shots fired from the rear were really fired by a party of Americans, so completely did the boys deceive them, though he could not account for the fact that Rodney and Jack were not among the captives.

The first halt of any consequence did not take place until the Tories had put many miles between them and the manor.

Then reins were drawn in a grove of great natural beauty, and it was determined to deal with Thomas Callaway after the merciless manner of the times.

The old man was lifted from the horse and placed in the middle of the foraying band.

Short was to be his shrift.

They recalled his former rescue by Black Gorman, and it was determined that this should not happen the second time.

Several pine torches had been provided to light up the weird scene, and Capt. Samson approached the prisoner.

"You might have surrendered and saved the effusion of blood," said he.

The only answer he received was a scathing look which did not smooth his temper.

"You have been judged already," the Tory leader

proceeded. "Sentence having been passed on you, nothing is left but its execution."

"You have me in your power," said Callaway at last.

"And we intend to see that justice is meted out to you. You are against the king."

"I am against tyranny wherever I find it."

"You have openly aided and abetted this rebellion."

"I have lifted my voice for freedom. If that is treason, make the most of it."

Capt. Samson scowled.

In order to guard against a surprise, pickets had been thrown around the camp, and it would be impossible for the Tories to be molested in their murderous work without notification.

"What have you to say, Thomas Callaway?"

"You have just heard me."

"Then you plead guilty?'

"To hatred of tyranny, yes."

"That's sufficient."

At a sign from Capt. Samson a man came forward bearing a rope.

Alice uttered a sharp cry at sight of the symbol of death.

"Remove the ladies," said Samson, with a wave of his hand.

But at that moment Alice sprang forward and threw her arms round her father's neck.

The Tories looked at one another.

One of the darkest of the lot strode forward and caught hold of the girl's arm.

But Alice would not be shaken off, and her look abashed the despicable wretch.

"He is my father!" she cried. "Would you commit murder?"

"Do your duty!" roared the voice of Samson.

The hireling put forth his utmost strength to separate father and child, but it was a harder task than he had bargained for.

"Don't let the wench cow you!" was the stern command. "She must not interfere with the powers of justice. Take her away!"

A strong pull separated the pair, but Alice planted herself in front of her parent and defied the band.

"If you dare," she cried. "This is foul murder and vengeance will be swift and sure."

Capt. Samson laughed at this and ordered the girl to be taken away along with Dora.

But so defiant was her mien that those to whom the command was issued hesitated.

"It must be done," and the next moment Capt. Samson himself came forward with his eyes ablaze.

He was about to lay hands on the girl when her form seemed to increase in stature and a knife flashed in the light.

"If you dare, monster!" she exclaimed, and the blade executed a sudden swoop toward the Tory's face.

Capt. Samson drew back with a curse, but Alice did not flinch.

It was to be seen that she intended to make use of the weapon she had drawn if pressed, but the Tory band was not to be balked by a girl.

"To the limb with the old traitor," shouted the loyalist captain, and a rush was made in which Mistress Alice was rudely thrust aside.

She turned, however, and, with a cry, sprang toward her father, throwing herself by her agility between him and his enemies, and once more presented a defiant front.

By this time the blood of the Tories was at a white heat.

The interference had exasperated them beyond endurance.

The fair girl was seized despite the threat of the knife; she was thrown aside and fell at Dora's feet with a wild cry of utter despair.

The scene was most exciting.

The glare of the faggots gave it a ghostly appearance, and the weird light thrown off by them was terrorizing.

Thomas Callaway was dragged to a great limb that jutted out from the tree about ten feet from the ground and an agile Tory threw the noosed rope over it.

In another moment the death cord encircled the old man's neck and he felt it tighten.

"For the last time," said Capt. Samson, "will you renounce allegiance to America?"

"For the last time, no!"

"Then up with him!"

These words were accompanied by a wave of the hand, and the body of Thomas Callaway shot upward, the rope being manipulated by ten stout miscreants.

Alice uttered a cry and Dora echoed it as the old man was jerked clear of the ground.

Again the daughter sprang toward her father, but she was again seized and flung back.

It was enough to draw pity from a heart of stone, but the Tories of the Revolution had pity for no one.

The rope was now fastened around a limb, and the torchlight fell upon the face of the master of Callaway Manor.

This time there was to be no rescue.

"You will hear me now," exclaimed Mistress Alice, as she freed herself from the grasp of the man who held her and reached the spot where her father hung. "The day of vengeance for this brutal deed will not be long delayed. God is a God of vengeance, and He will repay. More than this: I will hunt down the miscreants responsible for this bloody work, and when my day comes let every man look in vain for mercy. The blood of Cromwell's famous captain runs through

my veins, and, as you have slain, so shall you feel the vengeance of the child of Thomas Callaway."

She embraced the still swaying limbs of her father and then rejoined Dora.

"To horse!" cried Capt. Samson. "Let the buzzards feast on the flesh of the old rebel, and so may it be with all who take up arms against our king!"

In a little while the two girls were lifted from the ground, and, with a last look at the one whom she loved so dearly, Alice Callaway was hurried from the scene, followed by her fair companion in misfortune.

But little was said by the Tory troop during the next hour.

The band galloped through the country, stopping now and then to listen for pursuers, but none seemed near, and at last at daybreak the horses sniffed a meadow and soon afterward the Tory camp was reached.

Just beyond it lay another camp, and here and there were seen the bright uniforms of British dragoons.

"Is Col. Tarleton over yonder?" asked Alice of her nearest escort.

"It is Tarleton's camp."

"Will we be taken to it?"

"That rests with Capt. Samson."

As the girls were lifted from the horses in the heart of the encampment, a handsome-looking officer in scarlet advanced toward them.

"That is Col. Tarleton," whispered Dora. "Uncle once shod his horse and I remember his face."

Mistress Alice uttered a cry and sprang toward the officer.

"Is this Col. Tarleton of the king's dragoons?" she inquired.

"I have the pleasure to bear that name and rank, miss," was the answer.

"Then let me accuse yon man of murder," and Alice turned and covered Capt. Samson with a withering finger.

"Of murder, miss? That's a grave charge."

"I witnessed the terrible deed, for it deprived me of a father. I was made an orphan last night by the brutality of that man, who pretends that he carries out your king's commands."

"Then your name is——"

"Alice Callaway."

Tarleton seemed to start and threw a quick look in the direction of Capt. Samson.

"From what I have heard of your father, miss, he was very bitter against the king."

"Have we no right to our opinions?"

"No right to rebellion," was the reply.

"Then to think is to rebel? Is that true, Col. Tarleton?'

"Your parent was a rebel, not only a rebel, but he has done all he could against us."

"He was for liberty."

"He rebelled against His Majesty, George III., and we are here to punish rebellion and high treason."

Alice drew back and looked for a moment in silence at the great dragoon.

"Then you indorse the act committed by Capt. Samson last night? You sanction murder in South Carolina?"

"We must deal with rebels without gloves."

"Then may the vengeance of Heaven overtake you as well," cried the patriotic girl. "If this is to be war to the death so let it be, Col. Tarleton. For every drop of blood shed by British arms in the country, in order to destroy the love of liberty, a hundred will be shed in retaliation. King George, if he be a man, should blush to think that Col. Tarleton wears a scarlet uniform."

With this Alice turned and walked away, leaving the officer looking after her with a face almost as red as the coat he wore.

"On my life, a rebel witch!" he exclaimed to one of his aides. "If we are to conquer the women of this accursed country I fear it will be a long campaign."

"An endless one," said the aide, as he flecked his leggings with a whip.

Just then Capt. Samson came up and saluted.

"So you hanged the old rebel, did you, captain?" queried Tarleton.

"We strung him to an oaken limb. There's one

rebel less to hang when the general hanging takes place."

"You did well, sir. I thank you in the name of the king. But you might have left those young ladies behind you."

With this Tarleton strode away and Capt. Samson sent after him one of his wolfish snarls.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GALLANT SURPRISE.

Failing to find traces of Capt. Samson's band at the upper ford, as they had hoped, the young patriots, accompanied by Cupe, the slave, were compelled to turn back.

They rode rapidly to the lower ford, where they found many evidences of a crossing, and, in a short time, they were on the farther side of the stream.

But they had lost much valuable time and were far behind the enemy.

However, they tried to make up the lost time by hard riding, and in due course reached the scene of the hanging.

There, to their horror, they found the body of the master of Callaway Manor dangling from the limb of the oak, and they lost no time in cutting it down.

Their indignation knew no bounds.

The inhumanity of the Tory chief angered them beyond expression and many were the threatenings of vengeance that escaped their lips.

Cupe was left to bear the body of his beloved master home, while the boys pressed on.

The trail of the miscreants was so fresh that they had no difficulty in following it.

They did not think of a party of Tarleton's dragoons being in the vicinity, although that ranger was liable to turn up almost anywhere.

He was accustomed to hang upon the flanks of Greene's army and more than once his fearlessness had cost him dearly, as Washington's troopers met him bravely and disputed with him for the mastery of battle.

Rodney and Jack came almost suddenly upon Tarleton's camp.

They were struck with amazement at sight of it, but as the trail had led them in that direction they now doubted not that Capt. Samson had joined the dragoons.

They also believed that they had found the girls, for they were equally sure that they were prisoners in the British camp.

Finding a densely wooded place, which afforded a good screen during daylight, the boys penetrated to its center and prepared to rest till nightfall.

They were determined not to retrace their steps without an effort to rescue the two fair captives.

From the wooded knoll upon which they lay concealed they had a good view of the encampment, and they discovered that the two forces had come together.

They even detected Capt. Samson from his swagger as he passed through the camp and made out an officer whom they took to be Col. Tarleton himself.

Slowly the day passed for the young forayers.

They saw the sun decline behind the hills in the west, and at last night threw her somber mantle over all.

"Now for it!" said Rodney, to his friend. "We must rescue the captives before daybreak, or we will lose the fruits of our long ride."

"If we are caught there will be other gallows' fruit. You know what Tarleton thinks of boy soldiers."

"Yes, he wantonly hanged the Biddle brothers last winter, and we will suffer a like fate if we fail, but we must not fail, Jack."

"Certainly not."

It was one thing to watch a camp of the enemy and quite another to enter it on a hostile mission.

But the boys did not permit the outlook to daunt them.

Leading their horses to the edge of the camp underneath the curtain of stars, they left them in a secluded spot and crept into the cantonment itself.

Tarleton had selected an ideal spot for his camp, a spot naturally guarded, and the white tents showed the boys where they were.

From what they had seen from their ambush they were almost certain that they could locate the tent in which the captives had been placed for a guard paced in front of it.

They crept toward this particular canvas with the utmost caution.

In the center of the encampment stood a large tent, which was Tarleton's, and there a number of officers were making merry with wine recently stolen from some rebel's cellars.

They could hear the loud sounds of the carousal as they were borne outward on the wind, and the favorite drinking song of the British struck harshly upon their ears:

"We drink the health of Royal George,
We cut the rebels down,
And with our swords for him we forge
A brighter, grander crown!

"Then ho! ho! ho! to war we go,
We fill this rebel land with woe;
Our good swords ring, our pistols sing,
Huzza! huzza! for George, our king!"

The boys paused a moment and looked at one another with smiles as the drinking song floated out upon the night wind and was borne afar, to echo back through wood and marsh.

"They're having a fine time," whispered Jack. "But just wait till Col. Washington gets a chance at them. There will be songs of another nature then."

"Ay! that there will. Other swords will ring then and upon the heads of the singers over yonder."

Slipping from tree to tree, as they approached the

tent which was their goal, they made out at last the figure of the sentry who guarded it.

Of course Capt. Samson was with Tarleton.

When they crouched within ten feet of the tent they watched the sentry a few moments and laid their plans accordingly.

They noticed that he was a well-built dragoon, who did not particularly like his job, for he walked negligently on his beat, with his weapon in an improper position for a soldier.

"The tree yonder when the guard turns his back the next time," said Rodney, in low tones.

Jack nodded.

Presently the opportunity came and the boys gained the tree unperceived.

They were now within a few feet of the sentry's beat and only waited for their opportunity.

In a short time the sentry came back slowly, and, at a signal from Rodney, both sprang forward and fell upon the unsuspecting dragoon like young panthers.

The guard was borne to the ground in the twinkling of an eyelash.

A pair of hands were placed over his mouth, and, as he tried to resist, Jack struck him a vicious blow on the head with the butt of a heavy pistol which put him out of the way for the moment.

In another second they had securely gagged him,

"As the boy partisan pulled aside the flaps of the prison tent, two white, half-frightened faces stared at him." (See page 129)

the man being unconscious, and now they had their own way.

Rodney sprang to the flaps of the tent.

They had made but little noise in the capturing of the sentry, but that little had been heard by eager ears.

As the boy partisan pulled aside the flaps of the prison tent, two white, half-frightened faces stared at him.

"Not a word," said the young Whig, quickly. "Get ready to leave this villainous nest."

"We are ready now!"

As the two girls stepped from the tent Rodney and Jack seized the guard and threw him inside, where he fell upon the bundle of straw which had been provided as beds for the fair captives.

"Come," said Rodney. "We must now traverse the camp to the horses. The officers are still merry over their rebel wine and the poor privates seemed to have slipped away to dreamland."

With the greatest caution the quartet commenced the movement toward the confines of Tarleton's camp.

The crisis of the adventure had been reached.

All knew that discovery meant terror, if not death, but this only lent the four courage.

"Did you find—father?" suddenly asked Alice, as she clutched Rodney's arm.

"Yes."

"And——"

"Not a word. The wind may bear a whisper to Tarleton's watchers."

Alice did not press her question.

Suddenly Jack touched Rodney's shoulder and pointed to the left.

All halted and looked in that direction.

Outlined against the myriads of stars was a giant figure which had the statuesque pose of a Roman.

Indeed it looked like a statue in bronze, but the boys knew that it was a living enemy.

The man was not twenty yards away, and Jack could not have told when he came to the spot he occupied, nor how. But he was there, and his presence meant danger.

More than this, the man stood between them and the horses, a deathly barrier as it seemed.

The sight was enough to chill the blood in the veins of the four, and the girls drew closer to their friends.

What was to be done? There was no time for a council of war; the danger was too imminent.

But something had to be done and that immediately.

Rodney sized up the situation, and with a look at Jack bounded straight at the ghostlike figure.

The man did not look for this.

Before he could make a move calculated to baffle the young Whig, he was upon him and the two went to the ground together.

Jack, seeing this, ran to Rodney's assistance, and the boys soon discovered that they were dealing with no ordinary person.

The man struggled like a savage taken unawares; he rolled his huge bulk over, struck out with arms and feet, and finally freed himself only to be attacked again.

This last time he was struck with a heavy stick which Jack had picked up, and, half stunned, reeled away, uttering a wild cry.

"Now for the horses!" cried Rodney. "It is now or never. That rascal will have the camp at our heels."

The boys guided the girls to the steeds and but little time was consumed in mounting.

"Wasn't that Capt. Samson?" queried Jack.

"I thought so, but am not certain. If it was—— Hark!"

There were the sounds of many voices in the camp.

Men were rushing hither and thither, pandemonium seemed to reign everywhere, but fortunately as yet there was no head to the movement.

Gathering up the reins, the boys urged the horses forward at their utmost speed.

The animals seemed to realize by the double burdens they now carried that everything depended on fleetness of foot, and they stretched away like Barbary coursers.

Away over the road which led from the camp they went, their riders clinging gallantly to their backs,

speaking only at long intervals in the intense excitement of the run.

Not until several miles had been placed between them and the camp was a rein drawn.

Then they halted and listened.

A gentle wind was blowing through the trees that lined the road, and near by a little stream purled over its pebbly bed.

Jack sprang from his horse and put his ear near the ground.

Suddenly he sprang up and resumed his place in the saddle.

"You need keep nothing from us," said Alice, looking at the boy. "They are in pursuit."

"Yes, the enemy has recovered from the surprise. He is now behind us riding like the wind."

"Then we shall outstrip the wind," cried Rodney. "Heaven helping us, we will beat Tarleton's scarlet riders and win the victory."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEMON WITH THE HAMMER.

The belief, nay, the evidence, that British and Tories were on their trail, sufficed to render the situation most desperate.

Both Jack and Rodney knew something of the riding qualities of Tarleton's fierce dragoons.

These men in scarlet had been the terror of the South for many a long month.

They seemed born to the saddle and knew the country over which they rode.

Aided by their Tory friends, they had devastated one of the loveliest parts of the land, and they did not hesitate to destroy property and lives on the slightest provocation.

Mothers frightened their babes to sleep with the name of Banastre Tarleton, and his warfare, notably the affair at Waxhaws, had rendered his name accursed forever.

The fugitives, fully expecting in time to be overtaken—for the two steeds carried double, and, besides, had not fully rested from the long ride to the British encampment—sped on.

They did not have to draw rein now to listen to the sounds of pursuit.

They could hear the clink of sabers and knew that the enemy was riding in their wake.

"They don't hear us," said Rodney, suddenly, as they reached the bank of a small stream that flowed through the soft starlight. "We must fight them here."

"As you say, boy," responded Jack.

A fringe of trees stood along the water's edge, while beyond it lay a spot of open ground.

The enemy would have to cross this open space before reaching the creek, while the boys and their friends were well concealed by the timber.

The pistols were placed in the girls' hands.

"You know how to use the weapon?" Rodney said to Alice.

The young girl smiled.

"Father taught me."

"I can vouch for your marksmanship, Dora," he went on, as he looked at the blacksmith's niece. "We used to practice with the pistol by the old forge."

"And I always beat you, didn't I?"

Rodney nodded, while he and Jack made ready with the muskets.

All knew that the creek was not deep and could be forded with the greatest ease, therefore they determined to meet the enemy as he plunged into the open and afforded good targets for their aim.

"Don't throw away any shots. Remember this is retaliation and vengeance."

"Just as if I could forget after what I have passed through," said Alice Callaway.

Nearer and nearer came the pursuers.

It was necessary to stop them at the creek if they were to be stopped at all.

It was not possible that Tarleton had ordered out his entire force in the chase, and the young partisans hoped they would not have to encounter more than a dozen.

"Here they come!" whispered Jack, as the enemy reached the edge of the open ground.

It was true, for the next moment the little place seemed alive with horses and men.

"Wait a moment. They will come nearer still."

The suspense was terrible.

"Fire!" suddenly cried Rodney, and four well-aimed weapons belched forth their contents.

There were loud cries among the hunters in red and buckskin.

Horses fell back and two men dropped from the saddles.

The whole band seemed thrown into the direst confusion.

This gave the boys time to push new charges into the muskets and again the weapons spoke.

"Now the creek," said the boy leader of the little band.

The horses plunged through the belt of trees and dashed across the stream.

Bullets whistled round their heads and cut the water about the feet of the horses.

"Bad shooting in a bad cause," grinned Jack, with a laugh following.

As the steeds scrambled up the opposite bank the enemy fired another volley and came forward.

Then there rose underneath the stars a figure at which all four looked with staring eyes.

It was a man mounted on a large, black horse, and with a yell that seemed to congeal the blood of all who heard, he plunged into the ford straight in the teeth of the king's men.

"Some madman," said Jack. "Look what a strange weapon he has. It is not a sword."

This was true, for the weapon carried by the stranger was a hammer at the end of a long handle, and he swung it over his head as he drove his steed at the foe.

He stood erect in his stirrups, his great bulk looking weirdly large in the uncertain light.

"Death to George!" he cried at the top of his strong, vibrant voice. "Down with royalty in North America!" He was in the middle of the stream now.

The hammer swung over his head, and he had relinquished his hold on the reins.

"Is he real?" cried one of the girls.

"What make of monster can he be?" queried Jack, who gazed wonder-struck at their new ally. "Some

madman at large, no doubt, or some person driven insane by the work of Tarleton's minions."

The enemy, who had reached the water, drew back with pallid faces.

Clearly they had never encountered a foe like the unknown.

His voice roared like a tornado, leaping from his throat in mad sentences, while he drove his heels into his horse's flanks and urged him on.

"Will they withstand the apparition?" cried Rodney. "Look! they are going to meet him. No, they are drawing back, but that will not balk the night fiend."

True it was that the king's men on the farther bank were hesitating, for they had not fired a shot at the unknown.

Seconds seemed minutes to those who beheld this strange conflict.

"Death to all Tories and British! Down with King George!" welled again from the giant's throat.

The black horse struck the other bank.

His rider seemed to lift himself from the stirrups as he shot straight at the enemy.

The hammer executed a new circle and a new yell followed it.

"Look! look! He is among them!"

The pursuing band had hesitated too long.

The apparition was really among them, the hammer moving in swift and terrible circles around his head.

Horses were forced back upon their haunches, and men with blanched faces reeled from the madman.

It was a scene of terror and confusion.

The terrible hammer made a pathway through the ranks of British and Tories for its owner.

It did not seem a second until the unknown was beyond them, and then, to the amazement of all, he turned and came back.

By this time the king's dragoons seemed to recover a part of their courage, for they struck at the unknown with their sabers, but the novel weapon beat them down.

It was like Thor riding through a flock of sheep.

"Can't we help him?" cried Dora.

"He is vengeance itself," was the reply. "Let us wait till he comes."

There were flashes of muskets and pistols behind the stranger, but he seemed to bear a charmed life.

He turned, laughed at the enemy, and plunged through the water.

The sudden checking of Tarleton's men in such a startling manner had held the four spectators almost spellbound.

They were speechless when the unknown appeared among them.

"Come! Follow me!" he commanded, and the two horses fell in behind him.

He kept well ahead, with bullets still whistling

round the ears of all, for the enemy, while they feared to continue the pursuit, could still send leaden missiles in their wake.

For more than a mile the unknown led the little party through the woods and over the open lands.

He spoke not, but sat his saddle like a born Cossack.

More than once Dora leaned forward and studied him attentively.

Her face assumed a singular expression while she did so, as if there was something familiar about the unknown.

"I half believe it," she was heard to exclaim at last.

"What do you half believe, Dora?" asked Alice.

The blacksmith's niece was silent.

"No, it cannot be, for they hanged him; I'm sure they did."

"Dora," put in Rodney, "you remember the warning we found on the tree where Capt. Samson hanged your uncle?"

"Yes."

"Well, look at those shoulders. Isn't there something familiar in their shape?"

"There is, there is! I see it now. But yet it cannot be he."

"Ride on and look back in his face."

"You can urge the horse forward and I will look."

Rodney did this and the steed, feeling the prickings

of the spur, soon came alongside of the animal ridden by the unknown.

Just then the little party struck an open glade, and Rodney's steed reached the black.

"Look closely," the boy whispered to Dora.

In another moment their horse had passed the strange helper, and the daughter of the forge looked keenly into the bearded face as they passed it.

"It is true. Uncle Jackson is the madman!"

In another second the big black had forged ahead and was pushing across the glade with increased speed.

"That accounts for the hammer," said Rodney. "It would naturally be his weapon. He must have unearthed his tools."

"It was little short of murder, the way he broke heads with that terrible weapon."

"It was justice! It saved us, girl."

In a short time they beheld the strange ally awaiting them on the summit of a slight knoll.

"We shall know now," said Jack to Alice.

"That is if he sees fit to disclose his identity."

"But he has evidently halted for that purpose."

The unknown seemed to have halted for consultation with those behind him, and as the two steeds came up he pointed ahead.

"You must leave me here," he said. "There is no fear of pursuit from now on."

"But you will let us thank you?" exclaimed Rodney. "You came to the rescue in the nick of time."

"I came in time to break a few heads, you mean. You will go on."

"Nay, let me see you first," cried Dora; "I know you, and I am Dora!'

The arm that pointed ahead was not dropped a hair.

The features of the man did not relax any of their gravity at Dora's words.

"Go! Young sirs, you will be needed in Greene's camp ere long. The battle hour is almost at hand."

"That is true, and we want to strike when it comes, but you must let us thank you——"

"Go!" was the stern interruption. "No thanks for duty done. Long live the cause of liberty in North America and confusion to King George!"

He swung the hammer before his face as if in menace, and Rodney did not approach nearer.

"Good-night. We will meet again," he continued. "The road to vengeance is broad enough for all of us."

"That is true, but you will surely——"

"Enough! Good-night, I say."

With this the ally turned and gave his horse the spurs.

"One moment, only one!" cried Dora, flinging out her arms imploringly. "Uncle Jackson, listen for a moment. I hid the papers before they reached the house. I—I—— Too late!"

Her last words were addressed to Rodney, for the black horse and his rider had vanished on the opposite slope of the hill and they were alone again.

"It was Uncle Jackson," said Dora, "but he was mad—mad—bereft of reason."

"Tyranny will have much to answer for in the Carolinas before the war ends," and with this Rodney motioned for the journey to be resumed, which was immediately done.

CHAPTER XV.

A PISTOL IN HIS FACE.

The rest of the ride to Callaway Manor was without incident.

It was a sad return for Alice, who could repair to the grave of her father, which had been made by the faithful Cupe, and pour out the sorrow of her young heart in silence.

After seeing the two girls safe under the old roof, Rodney and Jack bade them adieu and returned to Greene's army.

The little band of patriots had been sadly reduced by desertions and the results of battle.

The militia had gone home in large numbers, and there was no certainty about their return.

Cornwallis was out of the way for the time at least, but Lord Rawdon lay at Camden with a strong force watching Greene, and eager for an opportunity to swoop eaglelike upon him and crush him at one blow.

The lack of numbers, however, did not daunt the heroic Greene.

He resolved to take the initiative and bring about a battle before his enemy expected it.

Tarleton and his Tory allies were overrunning the whole district, plundering and murdering wherever

they could, the tragical close of Thomas Callaway's life being but an incident in their merciless campaign.

As for Red Dan, whom we left, as the reader will recollect, in Greene's camp, after being assaulted by the patriot blacksmith, he had recovered from the terrible choking and had been tried as a spy by court-martial.

The young scapegrace was saved by the skin of his teeth, as it were, and a few days afterward he effected his escape and turned up suddenly at home.

Here he was met by Austin Jeffrys, his father, the same stern, old, uncompromising royalist, who, flew into a passion, declaring that a general who would try his son for a spy deserved the most ignominious death the passions of war could inflict.

"And they wanted to hang you, did they?" demanded the old man, as he struck the floor with his cane.

"They came near doing it."

"Wanted to hang a Jeffrys! Well, I'll get even with them one of these days. Now, my son, I've got something to say on the question of marriage."

This was a subject which Red Dan did not care to discuss just then.

"You remember the beautiful Miss Somers, of Somers Knob?" continued Jeffrys, Sr.

Dan winced and looked away.

"Come, sir, no getting away from this business. You recall her, of course?"

"I've seen the lady."

"Of course you have. Well, sir, she has consented to become Mrs. Jeffrys."

"What, you haven't——"

"Certainly I have. You couldn't woo her for yourself, for you were absent, therefore I took the matter into my own hands and have the preliminaries all arranged."

"But don't you think you've been—well, just a little hasty?"

"Not a bit hasty, young sir."

"You might have waited till after the war. I might get a bullet through me before that."

"Or get hanged by Marion or Greene, eh?"

"One fate or the other is probable," said Dan. "I'm quite sure that Mistress Sarah does not care to wear widow's weeds so soon."

Austin Jeffrys watched his son in silence for a minute.

"You love the Whig chit, I see," he ventured.

"Did I say so?"

"Silence sometimes speaks louder than words. You still cling to the Callaway girl. Why, sir, they've hanged her rebel father——"

"I know that."

"Do you think for a moment that she would look at you?"

"She won't look away while I'm present. I'm sure of that."

"I don't want the Jeffrys blood mixed with the blood of rebels!" almost roared the old Tory. "You failed to find the papers which Jackson, the blacksmith, had in his house."

"I searched the premises carefully, but they could not be found."

"That was poor work. I could have done better myself."

"What were those papers?"

"They were worth their weight in gold. Why, sir, they settle upon the girl—Dora, they call her—a fortune which is now across the water. With those papers in my possession I could deprive her of every penny of it. Isn't that enough for you? I told you to search every nook and crevice of the house."

"Which I did, father."

"And you hanged the old blacksmith, too?"

"Strung him up."

Dan knew better than this. True, they had hanged old Jackson, but his meeting with the hanged man in Greene's camp had almost proved his own undoing. He did not think it wise to acquaint his father with the truth.

"Well, going back to the marriage question," resumed Austin Jeffrys, "you will consider yourself engaged to Mistress Sarah."

"Engaged by proxy, I presume."

"Call it that if you like. Her father is proud of the match."

"Well, I wish him much joy over his prospects."

Old Jeffrys caught the sarcasm, poorly concealed by his son's tones.

"The ceremony will take place this day a week."

"What, so soon?"

"You will want to go back to the army, and I thought best not to have you absent from it too long. This war is liable to end suddenly and you haven't had much of a chance as yet to distinguish yourself."

"Yes," answered Dan, dolefully, "if Greene continues the tactics he has devolped during the last few months the war will come to a hasty close."

"You don't seem to rate our generals very high."

"Why should I? Cornwallis has been completely outgeneraled by this rebel, who is, so I am told, the son of a Quaker. Just think of it, a warrior of repute beaten by the scion of a sect opposed to wars. It is disgraceful."

"But Lord Rawdon is confronting Greene now."

"That is true and you will see him outgeneraled as well."

"I can't for the life of me see how a raggamuffin army can outwit us."

"They outfight us also!" exclaimed Dan. "Why, sir, when men wear nothing but a waistband and carry

moss on their shoulders in order to relieve the pressure of the musket, marching shoeless hundreds of miles and all the time on the verge of starvation, how are you going to conquer them?"

Austin Jeffrys was silent a little while.

"You say they fight?"

"They are lions in battle."

"But their militia runs."

"Of course it does. But the regulars, the Continentals, as they call them, stand like stone walls."

"Why doesn't Tarleton ride them down?"

"Their Col. Washington rides Tarleton down," smiled Red Dan.

The old man again pounded the floor with his cane.

"Very well. We'll beat them in the end, and then for a great hanging! It will beat Tyburn's jubilee days. We'll hang Greene first, then the Swamp Fox, then Washington, and Lee, and——"

"You'll catch them first, I suppose," broke in Dan, with a grimace.

"They're as good as caught already. But, my son, you will remain at the hall to-night?"

"I'll come back. I'm going to ride a little."

"Not to see the rebel witch?"

"That is wholly my affair," was the harshly spoken answer. "I am of age, you know."

"Then curses follow you!" and the old man raised

his hand threateningly. "If you go to Callaway Manor may disaster overtake you!"

Dan strode to the door and halted there.

"Nothing can break the bargain I have made," cried his father, as he gazed at the tall, young dragoon. "You must marry Mistress Sarah Somers, of Somers Knob."

The young man made no reply, but opened the door and was gone in a moment.

He proceeded to the stables and brought out his horse.

He no longer wore the uniform of a British dragoon, but was dressed in well-made garments that betrayed no rank.

A slave held the bridle while he mounted and the following moment he galloped away.

Left to himself, old Austin Jeffrys passed into the great, high-ceiled parlor and moved the light to a table, from whence its radiance would fall upon the portrait of a handsome lady in a heavy gilt frame.

For a long time old Jeffrys stood there with his gaze riveted upon the picture.

It affected, fascinated him.

The face was one of great beauty and, strange to say, it resembled the features of his son and heir.

In short, it was the picture of his dead wife and Dan's mother, and he often stood for hours before the painting, proud of her ancestry and his as well.

Meanwhile Dan was scurrying across the country, over roads which he knew as the sailor knows the sea.

The fresh horse carried him well and now and then he looked at his pistols, for he was liable to encounter Black Gorman or men of his ilk, and should be do so, a fight would surely follow.

It was late, late in the night, when Red Dan drew rein.

The outlines of an old mansion stood before him.

It stood on a gentle rise and the young man muttered to himself as he rode forward again.

He saw a light in one of the large windows on the lower floor just beyond the porch, and as he drew nearer he thought he distinguished voices in the house.

Holding the lines in one of his hands, he crossed the veranda and rapped lightly on the door.

In an instant there was a sharp little cry on the inside and he smiled to himself.

Footsteps came toward the door and a voice said:

"Who's there?"

"A friend," answered Red Dan.

"A friend to liberty?"

"Certainly."

"Whither comest thou?"

The young royalist hesitated. There might be a certain signal wanted to gain admission and he was at his wits' end just how to proceed.

"I come from the camps," he said, at last, hoping he had found a way out of the difficulty.

The next moment he heard some one unbarring the heavy portal and then the door swung slowly open.

Red Dan thrust his body inside and as the light that prevailed fell upon his face there was a cry, and two young girls with white faces fell back.

"You?" cried one of the frightened pair. "Of all men, you?"

A smile wreathed Dan's lips and he seemed to laugh inwardly at the speaker's fright.

"You can't remain here," continued the fair speaker, recovering in a moment. "This is no place for one who serves King George."

"That's why I'm here."

"You would have hanged my uncle," said the other girl. "You had me bound and left me to die in the old house."

"But it seems you didn't die there, Mistress Dora," grinned the scion of the house of Jeffrys.

"It was not your fault that I did not."

"But I came to see you, Mistress Alice," resumed Dan, turning to Alice Callaway, who had not taken her eyes from his face. "I ask you to become the wife of Daniel Jeffrys, of Jeffrys Hall."

Alice broke into a laugh.

"Your wife, sir? The wife of one who serves the greatest tyrant across the seas? Out yonder in the

garden under the oak is a grave that ought to answer your demand. Your wife, never!"

"That's pretty short, Mistress Alice. These are war times and one cannot be expected to woo after the established manner. You will not, then?"

"I will not!"

"But you shall! I swear it by the soul of my mother——"

"This is my hour of vengeance, Red Dan!" cried Dora, at that moment, and the young dragoon found himself looking into the barrel of a pistol which almost touched his face, and he saw, moreover, that the weapon was held tightly by the old blacksmith's niece.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW RED DAN WENT HOME.

Red Dan stood for a moment appalled when he saw the deadly menace of the pistol thrust into his face by the blacksmith's niece.

He had a right to believe that his career was about to terminate, for there was a dangerous flash in Dora's eyes and her hand was as steady as that of a bravo.

"I promised myself that the time for vengeance should come," the daring girl repeated. "You have come hither for doom, Red Dan."

The white finger touched the easy trigger.

The young Tory could only look into the muzzle of the pistol and count the remaining seconds of his life.

But for a hand that shot toward Dora's arm he would have reeled from the deadly flash to fall dead on the porch.

With a cry Alice clutched the arm of her friend and held it firmly.

"They hanged your father!" cried Dora.

"I know," replied Alice, clinging to the slender arm. "I know, Dora, dear, but——"

"Would you avenge him? Remember your oath."

"Not now. The time will come."

Dora with a look at her companion lowered the weapon and Red Dan was saved—saved for another fate.

"Now go! The night is behind you," commanded Alice.

He hesitated.

"Go!"

He saw a look in the speaker's eyes which told him that he might press her patience too far.

His mad mission had failed; that was evident now.

He would have to turn back.

Stepping aside, he smiled and touched his hat to the two girls, then dexterously leaped from the porch and ran to his horse.

"Confound them, I will get even!" he hissed to himself, as he sprang to saddle. "This war is not yet over. I will bring the beauty of Callaway Manor to terms some other time."

If he could.

In another second a horse was flying through the night.

The noble animal stretched away, keeping to the winding road that lay before him and at times almost unseating his mad rider by the boughs that crossed it.

Red Dan was beside himself with rage. To think that he had been foiled by two girls was exasperating, to say the least.

Some other time! The expression surged through his brain like a wave of flame.

Suddenly he became aware that he was not the only person on the road that night.

His alert ears caught the sound of hoofs behind him.

Clearly, to his suspicious mind, he was being pursued.

On, on he went, giving his steed a free rein and leaning forward in the saddle. He was a splendid rider and knew all the tricks of horsemanship.

Louder and louder the sounds behind him grew; they rang in his ears like the hoofs of some demon horse.

"Why not stop and ambush the fiend?" he suddenly said. "I can turn the tables on the enemy. Why not?"

But he did not know who was chasing him. He could not cross the intervening space, not even with his keen vision, and discern the man behind him.

Then, there was the uncertainty of meeting his superior, for sometimes the ambushed party wins the victory.

Something had to be done, and Red Dan had to think quickly, for the unseen was gaining on him.

Suddenly, with the ambush idea full in his brain, he drew rein.

To his surprise the other one stopped, too.

Visions of a wild Whig rider flashed through his mind; he could not keep them out.

At last he reached a bend in the road. The unseen was now but a few lengths behind him.

Drawing his pistols Red Dan, with bated breath, waited for his adversary.

Clearly he was now riding into the trap, and while Dan waited he stilled his wildly beating heart and nerved himself for the encounter.

In another moment his foe would dash by and then —the pistols!

He counted the breaths he drew and listened. Down the road, lit up by patches of starlight, came the galloping person.

Like a flash he came up with the young Tory.

But such a man!

Forgetting the cocked weapons he held in his hands, the scion of Jeffrys Hall glared with his eyes nearly starting from their sockets.

He saw a huge person seated on a black horse, a man with a wild, bearded face.

He saw more than this. He saw something performing great circles about the man's head, whether sword, club or hammer he could not at first make out.

But he soon solved the mystery, for he saw that it was a huge hammer fastened on a handle as long as a giant's arm.

This is what the demon of the night was swinging round his head, for he was hatless, and the impetus

of his wild gallop was throwing his shock of hair in many directions.

"The imp of darkness!" cried Red Dan. "From whence came that fiend?"

The rider of the night was past in a moment and then the Tory's courage came back.

He leveled both pistols at the giant and fired.

Both reports blended into one, there was a loud shout and the black horse seemed to halt.

"Hit!" said the young royalist. "There was a good deal of luck in that."

When he looked again he saw both horse and rider on the ground near him.

"Winged! Why not finish the fiend?"

He spurred his steed to the spot without stopping to reload, then leaped to the ground and ran forward with clubbed weapon.

In another moment he fell back, uttering a gasping cry, for the unhorsed demon had sprung to his feet and was making at him with the circling hammer.

"Down with King George!" yelled the fiend of the night. "Death to tyranny in North America!"

Surely he had heard that voice before. In the brief time he was left to prepare for the conflict he tried to recall when and where.

Like a flash of light the truth broke in upon his brain.

He had heard that cry last in Greene's camp.

He heard it when Jackson leaped upon him in the old hut.

He was face to face with that madman again, and practically at his mercy.

Red Dan, with the desperation born of despair, threw one of his pistols straight at the madman's face.

It missed its mark by a hair, but did not check the plunger.

On he came, the wild hammer making concentric circles in the air and Dan, in fear of it, threw out his arm.

Down went that member as the weapon struck it, and then darkness blotted out consciousness.

When he came back to life he was lying on a bed of moss with the stars above him.

At first he could not recall the events of the night, but gradually they came back to him.

Where he was he did not know. The region seemed strange to him and his head was filled with a thousand aches and pains.

Suddenly there rose before him the curse of the night, the madman with the hammer.

Red Dan fastened his gaze upon the fiend and studied him for a moment.

Now he would know his doom. He saw the bearded face bend over him and heard issue from the throat a laugh that would have done credit to a Malay.

"Red Dan go home," laughed the madman. "He meet old Jackson and Jackson take him to the hall."

What! That man take him home after beating him down with the terrible hammer?

He did not reply for fear of irritating the fiend, whom he now believed was truly insane, but looked up into the leaping eyes and darkish face.

"Red Dan did not die by Greene's rope; ha! ha!" continued Jackson, excitedly. "Old Jackson did not choke him hard enough. Where have you been, Red Dan?"

"That is my business."

"Of course it is, and it is Jackson's duty to take you home. You stole the papers and——"

"I never found them."

"You led the Tories to the old forge and carried off my tools. You were the hyena of that night. Now you go back to the hall with Jackson."

Dan was lifted from the ground and placed on the back of his horse, which stood near. His hands were lashed at his back and his feet bound to the sides of the animal."

There was no escape from this old madman.

"Is the old Tory waiting for his boy?" queried Jackson, leering into his captive's face.

"I cannot say."

"He is the wolf that owns you for his own. He is for the king."

"He is royalist, if you must know it."

"That dooms him, the old wolf! Ha! ha! Now off we are."

Red Dan yearned for a loose hand with a pistol in it.

He wanted to thrust the weapon against Jackson's head and scatter his brains along the road.

But he was helpless, not only helpless, but in the hands of a crazy man whose thoughts might in a moment turn to murder.

The two horses galloped along side by side, Jackson holding the bridle rein of Dan's steed and always watching his owner out of the corners of his eyes.

"Old man wants to see his son, eh?" he would say, now and then. "Well, he shall."

Dan said nothing in reply to such spurts on his captor's part.

The road seemed interminable to the young Tory, but all the time he knew that he was nearing home.

Midnight had slipped by and the stars of morning were in the clear ether.

Now the landscape, what he could make out, was familiar to him; he saw many things that reminded him of boyhood and home.

The horses crossed a little stream and then climbed the rise near the hall.

All at once Jackson leaned toward his prisoner and cut the bonds that held him.

Free at last!

A gleam of joy lit up Red Dan's eye for a moment and he looked at the mad blacksmith.

Oh, for a pistol or a knife, and he would lay the fiend dead on the roadside!

"This is your homecoming, Red Dan," suddenly cried Jackson, as his right hand fastened like a vise at the young Tory's throat. "You go back to the old wolf dead!"

"Heavens!" was all Dan could articulate, as he tried to shrink from that terrible hand, but in vain.

It was not to be broken loose by any strength of his, and he was an athlete.

He struggled as best he could; he tried to twist out of the saddle, but such was not to be.

"Mer—cy!" he gasped. "Mer——"

The word was broken on his lips.

His captor laughed; he saw—and it was the very last thing he did see—the devilish face of the insane blacksmith.

"Home, Red Dan; ha! ha!" laughed the fiend. "You have come back to Jeffrys Hall."

Those were the last words the young Tory ever heard this side his grave.

Old Jackson, rendered mad by the passions of the war, leaned toward his victim and sank his dark fingers deeper into the discolored throat.

Red Dan was as limber as a rag in his grip.

All at once Jackson sprang from his horse and,

dragging his victim after him, rushed toward the manor house near at hand.

He plunged across the broad veranda and struck the oaken door with his clinched fist.

A cry inside told that the summons had been heard.

Bolts shot back and the door swung open.

A haughty-looking old man with white hair confronted the madman of the Carolinas.

"Your spawn's come home, Austin Jeffrys!" cried Jackson. "The king has no further use for this piece of treachery!"

The following moment something fell at Austin Jeffrys' feet and Jackson fell back. The old man uttered a wild cry and held the light near the floor. Then, seeing the face of his son, whom he knew was dead, he swooned across the body.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DANGEROUS MISSION.

"Gen. Greene would like to see you."

These words, addressed to Rodney Black by Col. Washington, a few days after the last adventures, caused the boy partisan to start slightly.

The American army lay near Camden, which was occupied by Lord Rawdon, who had fortified it strongly.

Both commanders were watching each other, and, though Greene's force was greatly reduced, he did not shirk the danger that menaced him.

Rodney at once made his way to Greene's headquarters.

He found his general alone in his tent, where he was received with marked cordiality, for Greene was proud of his young recruits, but in a moment a serious expression settled over the chieftain's face.

"They tell me, boy, that you are acquainted in and about Camden?"

"I have been to the town frequently and the surrounding country is almost home to me."

"So much the better."

Rodney was silent; he felt what was coming.

"I wish some information as to the intentions of

the enemy," said Greene. "I want to learn the disposition of his forces, his real strength, and so forth. If you could get into his camp——"

"I do not think that part of it would be difficult," broke in Rodney, eager to help the cause in any manner that offered itself. "I am at your service, general."

Pleased with the young Whig's willingness, Greene proceeded:

"There is but one person whom you need fear," he said, "and that is your old personal enemy, Capt. Samson. But just now, from the last information I have received concerning him, Sumter is making it warm for him along the Catawba."

"I have heard that, too."

"You will exercise the greatest care in your trip. The question of disguise I leave entirely with you."

"May I not take Jack with me?"

"Your young friend, you mean? Well, as two pairs of eyes are sometimes better than one, I do not know but what that would, in this case, be a good idea."

"Then Jack will go. I have not asked him, of course, but he won't refuse; I know that."

Gen. Greene proceeded and gave some minute instructions as to the service he expected of his young spy and again admonished him to exercise the greatest care.

When Rodney was ready to leave the tent, Greene

came forward and took him by the hand. It was a proud moment for the young Whig.

"I must thank you for what you have already done for the cause," he said, looking kindly from his deep blue eyes. "Gen. Washington has heard of your exploits at Guildford and I was proud to report them. We are going to win in this war. The light is breaking in, even though it looks dark in some localities. This is the seventh year of hostilities. We have aid from France, but believe me, my boy, the eagle of liberty ere long will bathe his plumage in the sun and there will be no royal banner to kiss the breezes in North America."

Rodney noted the fervor with which Greene spoke and it thrilled him.

"That, too, is my belief," he exclaimed. "We will yet see Cornwallis entrapped."

"I believe he is even now treading the high road to doom. Washington and Rochambeau are on the alert and, between the two, I believe this scarlet fox will be trapped."

A hearty hand grasp followed these words and Rodney withdrew to make ready for his perilous mission.

Jack was as eager to enter Camden as was his friend.

The two boys did not confer long together.

As the long shadows of the April dusk fell over the camp of the enemy a dilapidated wagon, drawn by an equally poor mule, reached Rawdon's picket line.

The two country-dressed boys who occupied the one seat of the vehicle pulled up short at the guard's challenge and appeared to be unfamiliar with military usages.

"Can't we get through without the word? Is that it?"

"You've got to have the countersign," was the reply. "What do you think they've stationed me here for?"

"To keep the rebels from coming too close. Say, when you hang Greene and his ragamuffins I wish you would send us word. You'll find us over on the creek —Tom Spencer and Ned Bushnell. I guess we'd run half the night to see a lot o' rebels dangling from trees. Eh, wouldn't we, Ned?"

"Just try us, Mr. Redcoat."

"Well, if I'm not very much mistaken you'll hear of the biggest hanging these parts ever saw before long."

"Good!" and Rodney, who was Tom Spencer for the time, slapped his companion on the back.

"I say, Mr. Guard, how would you like a drink o' cider?"

"Come, they don't make cider this time o' year."

"But we make it in the fall and bury it in jugs in the cellar for winter and spring."

The picket's lips were seen to water at the bare thought of a drink of cider.

"Tom" reached under the hay, which partly filled the bed of the wagon, and produced a jug.

Handing it to the soldier, he told him to help himself.

"Keep the whole jug," laughed "Tom" at the man's piggishness, for he had uncorked the jug and the cider was staining his uniform in his haste to get all of it down his throat at once. "We've got some more here for the general——"

"For Rawdon? That's clever. Well, go and let him sample it. It's sharp enough to make his eyes snap. You're for the king, of course?"

"Would we want an invitation to a rebel hanging if we were for Greene and Washington?" queried "Ned."

"Certainly not."

The boys drove on and left the sentry helping himself to the cider, which had been procured by Greene from one of the bitterest rebels in the district. The ingredients put into it for preservation had given it a twang sharp enough to make men fight well.

Presently the little wagon wabbled into the town of Camden—wabbled is the proper word, for the wheels did not track and the spokes were loose.

They did not excite much interest, for country people came to the camp with early produce, which the troops bought up eagerly, paying in British gold, for the continental money of those days was not worth the paper it was printed on.

A few straggling houses were all that made up the village of Camden, the scene of Gen. Gates' defeat earlier in the war and the spot where that officer is said to have exchanged his "Northern laurels for Southern willows."

The boy spies drove down the one poor street, looking as innocent as country boys could and observing everything warlike that crossed their vision.

At length they pulled up in front of a house which appeared to be occupied by some officer of distinction, for a flag waved over it and a red-coated sentry of gigantic proportions paced back and forth in front of it.

"Move on, there!" growled the guard, as he spied the boys. "This is not Raggamuffin Street."

"What's that?" cried "Tom."

"I say we don't keep crowbaits at this inn. This is Lord Rawdon's headquarters."

"Oh!'

"And where might his excellency be?" asked Jack.

"Out of your reach, of course," grinned the soldier.

"Do you think we want to eat him?"

"No, but the crows will eat that animal if you don't keep 'im on the go."

The boys laughed heartily at this sally.

Just then a well-dressed soldier stepped from the house and the sentry drew up and saluted.

He wore a magnificent uniform, was stately in appearance and carried an elegant sword.

Rodney and Jack stared at him with well-put-on curiosity, then they ventured to inquire the way to Deepdale. Deepdale was a crossroads just beyond the camp, and a place of no particular importance.

Lord Rawdon, for the handsome officer was the commander of the British army, turned toward the wagon at the query.

"Where are you from, boys?" he inquired.

"From over the hills."

"What's the news?"

"We don't hunt it up, sir, but the rebel, Greene, says he is going to wallop Lord Rawdon one of these days."

A smile wreathed the general's lips and he broke into a laugh.

"So he says this, does he? Going to whip Lord Rawdon? Well, what do you think, boys?"

"We can't tell till we've seen what you have to whip him with."

"There is something in that," was the amused reply. "Well, when you go back over the hills just stop and tell this rebel, Greene, that Lord Rawdon doubts his ability to carry out his boast."

"Be you Lord Rawdon?"

"At your service, young sirs," smiled the general, with a mock bow.

Rodney now produced a jug from beneath the hay and extended it toward Rawdon.

"What's that?"

"Cider, some we made last fall and kept over. It's prime and fine."

The British officer called an aide from the house and bade him take possession of the jug.

"Here's another, general," said Rodney, bringing the second one to light. "We hope you'll soon make their Gen. Greene take to his heels."

"Make him run? Like a hare!" laughed Rawdon, pleased with the present of the cider, of which he was very fond. "Make yourselves at home in camp, young sirs. Don't be backward. You've already paid for your keeping," and with this Rawdon walked back into the house.

Getting into the good graces of the British commander had proceeded as well as the young spies could wish and they drove away with light hearts.

During the next half hour they had made the rounds of the camp, noting the fortifications, the positions of the batteries, the numbers of the soldiers of all arms and, in short, seeing everything that promised to be of service to the patriot cause.

When they turned back toward Rawdon's headquarters they had but one jug of cider left.

"For an emergency," said Rodney. "For the picket, you know, Jack."

They drove slowly back down the winding street.

The day had vanished and camp fires were burning everywhere.

Around them the red-coated soldiers were discussing their suppers and the campaign.

It was no secret in camp that the British would soon move out and fall upon Greene.

They greatly outnumbered him and hoped to inflict upon him a terrible defeat, after which they believed there would be nothing left of the rebel cause in the two Carolinas.

When near headquarters the wagon was surrounded by half a dozen soldiers, who loudly demanded cider.

They menaced the drowsy mule with their bayonets, thrust their guns beneath the hay and demanded drink.

In order to get rid of the boisterous lot, Rodney was forced to produce the last jug, but it was like throwing a shrimp to a whale.

In a few moments every particle of hay was pulled from the wagon, the vehicle itself threatened with destruction and the safety of the young spies seriously menaced.

"More to-morrow," cried Rodney. "Stand back there or we'll report you to your general."

"Precious little satisfaction you'll get," was the retort.

The young Whig struck the animal with the keen switch and the mule started off.

But the soldiers crowded closer and demanded cider, even after they had received evidence that the very last had been given them.

They clung to the wheels of the wagon, and taxed

the pulling powers of the animal in the shafts, Rodney the while belaboring the poor creature with all his might.

They reached the space in front of Rawdon's headquarters at last.

Hearing the uproar, that officer looked out and was immediately spied by the young spies.

"Help, general!" appealed Rodney, fearlessly. "They are trying to kill our mule."

Rawdon with a laugh turned suddenly back into the house.

"Here, captain," they heard him say to some one as yet unseen.

"Here, Capt. Samson, are the youngsters who brought the cider."

Capt. Samson!

The name seemed to chill the blood in the veins of our young heroes.

Were they to be betrayed by their worst enemy—the man who wanted their blood? It seemed so.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BORDER LINE OF DOOM.

Fortunately and unfortunately for the imperiled young patriots the man who appeared in the doorway in response to Lord Rawdon's call was not in a very good condition to betray them.

A glance at him told them that it was the redoubtable Capt. Samson, and therefore their old adversary.

He had just returned from a foraying expedition in which he had been severely handled by a detachment of Americans, who had left several of his followers on the field.

The captain had taken the nearest route to the British army, which he knew lay at Camden, and by dint of hard riding had escaped his foes.

Not only this, but he had plundered a wine cellar belonging to a prominent Whig and had partaken heartily of its contents.

As he swaggered out of the house and threw a glance in the direction of the boy spies he uttered a hoarse cry and looked again at the British commander.

"Gave you some cider, did they, general?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; you have just tasted it, captain."

"So I had and it's sharp enough to make one fight. We'll try some more."

With this he came toward the wagon intent on robbing it of its contents, especially if they consisted of cider jugs.

The boys put on the boldest front possible.

"Hand it out, youngsters!" cried Capt. Samson.

"We're just out, sir," said Jack.

"Come! come! Hand out your goods, I say. I want to drink the king's health and confusion to Washington and his rabble."

But the boys gently insisted that they did not have any more of the desired article, and even went so far as to express sorrow over their failure to supply the needs of the Tory captain.

Capt. Samson was now at the front wheel, looking up into their faces.

The crucial test had come and they both felt that the searching eyes of the Tory was reading them through their disguise.

Lord Rawdon stood near by enjoying Capt. Samson's discomfiture.

"Drive on, then," suddenly exclaimed the Tory, striking the mule with his open hand. "Don't stay here if your wagon can't become a commissary for the army."

He turned away as the animal started up again.

The boys breathed free again.

"Hold on!" suddenly rang the voice of Capt. Samson, in their ears. "Come back here. You may be rebel whelps. It won't be out of the way to have a little inspection."

This was the last thing the boys wanted. It meant betrayal and death.

"Come, captain," said Lord Rawdon, breaking in, "let us resume our council."

"No, siree! I intend to bring the young sprigs back for examination. They look like little rebels to me!"

"Rebels, forsooth, captain? Let them go!" And to the amusement of all the British general stalked forward and, catching Capt. Samson by the collar, dragged him toward the house.

Little did Rawdon dream what he had effected by his interference.

The protesting Tory was halted at the door of the house and then pushed inside.

"Saved, and by a British general!" exclaimed Rodney.

"We are in the woods yet," responded Jack. "Capt. Samson's words may have taken root in other minds and——"

"Halt!"

A soldier had stepped out from some shadows and stood like a statue in the road with his bayonet presented toward them.

Rodney immediately pulled up.

"What's the disturbance down there?" asked the redcoat.

"Oh," answered the boy, recovering in a moment, "we gave away all our cider, but they didn't want to believe it. We're going after more."

"But you can't fetch another load yet to-night?"

"No, to-morrow."

"But somebody said down there that you might be young rebels."

"Only in a joking manner. We rebels? When you have the grand hanging of Greene and his ragamuffins call on Tom Spencer and Ned Bushnell, will you?"

"Your names, I take it?"

"Yes. We live over the hills."

The gun was lowered and the boys urged the mule away.

"Free at last," said Jack. "I hope we've seen the last redcoat for to-night."

But their troubles were not yet at an end.

All at once they heard a clatter of hoofs behind them and a lot of dragoons came tearing up the road.

"Halt! Turn round and ride back to headquarters!" commanded the leader of the squadron. "Lord Rawdon wants to see you."

Back to Capt. Samson and the British general! The thought filled the boy spies with horror.

Yet they could do nothing more than obey, for the

troops completely surrounded them and there was no escape.

Putting the best face they could on the troublesome matter, and permitting the dragoons to act as escort just when they thought they were out of the trap, the young patriots turned back.

In a few seconds they were halted in front of Lord Rawdon's headquarters and awaited his lordship.

Presently he emerged from the house and came forward.

He dismissed the troops with a wave of his hand and laid one of his gauntleted hands on the rim of the wheel.

As he looked into the faces of the young adventurers they felt that their hour had come.

"Young sirs," said he, "do you know Mr. Austin Jeffrys, of the hall?"

"We've heard of him," said Rodney. "The old man who lives all alone now?"

"Yes, 'tis he. He lost his son and heir a few days ago."

"I've seen the hall," spoke Jack.

"Would you kindly take a message to him for me?"

Things seemed to be coming their way again.

"We'll be glad to take it, your lordship. We can get it to him to-morrow."

"Very well. Then tell him that by to-morrow night there will be no rebel army where now there is one.

Tell him that his old friend, Francis Hastings, Lord Rawdon, intends to sweep Greene and his horde from the face of the earth; that by set of sun to-morrow his son will have been avenged."

"Yes, sir."

"And tell him also for me, young sirs, that the glorious end of the war is near at hand. I intend to bring peace—peace with the sword, to the Carolinas, and before the first birds of summer nest the last rebel banner that kisses the air within their borders will have been shot to pieces by my guns. Adieu, young sirs, and may you live to see King George triumph over his rebellious colonies."

He fell back, a little the worse for wine and cider, and touched his hat to the two young spies.

In another second a giant figure nearly fell from the door.

"Stop 'em, your lordship!" this person brawled. "They are young rebels and no mistake!"

The general laughed and glanced at the boys in the wagon.

"Don't forget my message," he said. "And see that you deliver it to Austin Jeffrys as early to-morrow as possible."

"They're spies—rebel spies, I say!" roared Capt. Samson, almost too drunk to keep his feet. "I'll hang 'em right in your camp, and inside of an hour."

Rodney and Jack drew away as coolly as they could under the circumstances.

It was a trying moment.

"Go back, captain, go back!" exclaimed the general. "There's to be no hanging in my camp to-night."

"But, your lordship, they are spies——"

"Spies for whom, pray? Boys are not selected as spies. Captain, you've had too much Sumter lately——"

At this the Tory roared with rage, but the officer pushed him toward the house and followed him inside.

Saved again by Lord Rawdon, the two boys lost no time in getting out of the camp.

Not only had they picked up a good deal of valuable information since quitting Greene's army, but they had it from the British general's own lips that the Americans were to be attacked the following day.

They had completely deceived Lord Rawdon and they owed their escape to the fact that a drunken Tory captain had not been believed in his charges.

Had Capt. Samson been sober—— But they dared not think of such a thing. They resolved to lose no time in getting back to Greene and urged their animal forward as fast as possible.

The space that separated the two armies was not great. It was capable of being traversed in a short time and the boys drove under the stars with high spirits.

"Pretty close, Jack?"

"Uncomfortably close," was the reply.

"Now for the picket line."

They turned from the road, intending to avoid the sentry, but suddenly they beheld a soldier rise in front of them as if from the ground itself.

He came forward, his musket thrust into their faces and his eyes aflame.

"Get out, you young rats!" he cried. "Deliver over that stolen wagon."

"It is not a stolen wagon," protested Jack. "It belongs to Mr. Bushnell, and that is guarantee that it is in the right hands now, for I am his son, Ned."

"Get down, I say! No pulling the wool over my eyes!"

Here was another peril and the soldier had to be reckoned with.

Rodney appeared to acquiesce in the demand, for he threw the lines over the mule's back and began to leave the seat.

All the time he kept his gaze riveted upon the guard.

"Why didn't they arrest you in camp?" continued the redcoat.

"They didn't think we were thieves, as you call us."

"Where were their eyes? Anyone can see that much, even after dark."

By this time Rodney was fairly on the ground, while Jack was in no hurry to get down.

The sentry lowered his gun and called out, loudly:

"Do you want to be jerked down, young sir? Get down in a jiffy or down you come without ceremony."

The following second something landed against the redcoat and, with a furious cry, he staggered back and had his musket jerked from his grasp.

Rodney, the young blacksmith, had executed a flynig leap and the guard found himself disarmed in the twinkling of an eye.

He tried to recover his musket, but Rodney threw it above his head and brought the heavy stock down upon the redcoat's skull, felling him like a log.

It was all over in a minute.

As the soldier sank in a limp heap at the foot of a tree, Rodney threw the loaded gun into the wagon and clambered over the side, at the same time striking the obedient animal with his hand.

"Now for life—straight ahead!" he shouted in Jack's ear.

Away bounded the vehicle, striking unseen snags and roots, the boys clinging to the seat while they breathlessly tried to dodge the overhanging boughs.

Once out into the meadlike country, they urged the mule to still better speed and at last found themselves miles from the scene of danger.

The next "halt" that rang in their ears came from the right side of the landscape and they passed Greene's pickets.

"Your message to Jeffrys Hall?" said Jack. "What about that?"

"We'll deliver it after the fight."

"Do you think it will come to-morrow?"

"Undoubtedly. Both armies are ready for the fray and Gen. Greene doesn't intend to shirk the battle even though the British greatly outnumber us.

They drove into the camp proper and, knowing that Greene would be eager for their report, went direct to his tent.

They found him up, for he had the name of being the sleepless general of the Revolution. No fatigue overcame him, no threatening danger ever found Nathaniel Greene unprepared for it.

The boys told their adventures to a man who listened attentively.

Greene smiled at times and chased the weary expression from his handsome face with several little laughs.

"You can take some rest now," he said to the young spies. "You will need it, for we fight to-morrow. The cause of liberty is God's cause as well, and we will see to it that it dies not in North America."

Immortal Greene! He never despaired of the republic.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STARTLING CONFESSION.

In no portion of the colonies was the struggle for liberty waged with more bitterness than in the South.

Some of the most heroic feats of the Revolution were performed there, and under the palmettoes and magnolias the men who won the day against the king ever kept up a bold front and not for a moment relaxed their vigilance.

The names of Marion, Sumter, Pickens, Lee, Washington, Huger have come down to us surrounded by a halo that grows brighter as the years roll on, and the further we get from those men and others of their heroic mold the grander do they appear in our sight.

They won their laurels in the face of difficulties that would have shaken the faith of the most trusting, they had to deal with men in red coats and in buckram; they were called from their homes to take up the sword under the most adverse circumstances; but, halting not, they cut their way to fame and freedom.

The brave De Kalb fell at Camden, Pulaski gave up his life for us at Savannah, and the battlefields of the South during that seven years of war become the bivouac of the dead for hundreds of gallant patriots.

Whigs and Tories met each other without mercy and slaughtered the innocent as well as the guilty.

To be a Whig brought down upon one's head the vengeance of such men as Capt. Samson, and a Tory was made to fly for his life before Black Gorman and his band.

Between these hot partisans quarter was seldom asked or given.

Trees bore human fruit all over the South; the rope was in frequent demand, and women took part in the struggle, many of them bearing arms during the bitter strife.

Truthfully did Cornwallis say that so long as a woman survived in the Carolinas the king would never conquer America. It was a Mrs. Motte who furnished Marion with fiery arrows, which set fire to her own house, in order to bring victory to the banners of the Swamp Fox.

Volumes might be written on the heroism of the women of the South during the Revolution.

Their fame survives them though a century has rolled away.

It was the same night of the adventures of the boy spies in Lord Rawdon's camp that a man rode slowly over a road fringed with stately trees.

He was a man of grief and sorrows.

At the beginning of the war he had taken sides with

the king, for he was haughty and loved royalty, under which he had been nurtured.

His last grief had been the keenest of all.

Had not old Jackson, the mad blacksmith, thrown his own son dead at his feet?

Austin Jeffrys knew that his hour was near at hand.

A Tory, he feared no living man.

He had shut up Jeffrys Hall, taken a last look at the portrait of his wife in the lofty room, saddled his fleetest horse and ridden from the plantation.

His face was turned toward Rawdon's camp.

It was late when he entered it.

The sentinels, looking into the face of the old man and hearing his name, stepped aside for him with lowered muskets.

They seemed to feel that he was on an important mission, as indeed he was.

The guard in front of the general's headquarters stopped him, but let him pass.

There was something stately and awe-inspiring in the presence of the old Tory and they could not refuse him admittance.

He found Rawdon looking over some maps and the moment he was seen he was welcomed.

Lord Rawdon stood clasping old Jeffrys' hand in silence.

He dared not mention the grief that filled the father's heart.

At last Jeffrys spoke:

"General, I have come to you for vengeance. I have come to give my life for the cause."

"You, friend Austin?" cried Rawdon.

"I! I am alone in the world. A hand that serves our foes took from me the last support of my life. My son was flung dead at my feet. I may meet the murderer. That is my hope. You are going to fight?"

"To-morrow, if Greene will stand for a battle."

"He will stand. I have watched that man all through the struggle. He runs, but he fights."

"That is true."

"I want to serve in the ranks to-morrow. I can sit a horse despite my age. Years have not broken my spirit nor cooled my blood. I come of a fighting line."

"I know it. Your sires fought for Charles at Marston Moor. You shall have your desire."

The old man smiled.

"It is the dying wish of Austin Jeffrys to fall fighting for his king," he said. "He can wield a sword as did his ancestors; he can strike and spare not, as did the cavaliers of old."

Rawdon poured out some wine and the master of Jeffrys Hall drank eagerly.

"What is the news from the outside?" asked the general.

"I have but little for you. The Whigs have flocked

to Greene's banners, but not with the alacrity of other campaigns. He has not the force he had at Guildford."

"Nor the ground," was the reply. "We shall beat this rebel to-morrow."

"I hope so."

"His sun will set then. He will never again head even a rabble.

Rawdon was boastful, but he meant every word he spoke.

Austin Jeffrys sat down and buried his aged face in his arms and Rawdon, stepping back, respected his grief.

Presently the tramping of soldiers was heard and the old man looked up.

"Stuart's patrol," said Rawdon.

Jeffrys shook his head.

"It is terrible, this grief, but it is war," he spoke, in low tones. "With whom can I fight to-morrow, general?"

"With Tarleton, if you like."

"It shall be with Tarleton, then. My boy fought under him. Let the father follow his example."

"Then you shall serve with Tarleton. He will be in the thick of the battle, for I intend to show these rebels that Tarleton's swords have lost none of their keenness."

Pressed to share a pallet in the room, Austin Jef-

frys retired, while Lord Rawdon resumed his occupation.

There was something pathetic in this old man coming to the field of battle.

For a few moments the British general watched the grief-seamed face as it was revealed in the light that prevailed.

He pitied the old man and cursed the fortunes of war which had brought him to his present station.

Childless, old and sorrowful, he had at last offered what little remained of life to vengeance and the king.

Suddenly Rawdon was startled by a strange cry and he saw Austin Jeffrys sitting upright on the pallet.

"I cannot sleep without confession," he said.

Rawdon looked amazed.

"What have you to confess?" he queried.

"Much. Will you listen, general?"

"If you insist, yes."

"I insist."

Jeffrys came over to the table and took a camp stool.

Leaning on the board in front of him for a moment he studied his lordship's face and then began:

"It was in England, long ago. When I was a younger man I became infatuated with one of the fairest women in Haworth. She was all the world to me. I would have given my life for her smile; I was love blind.

"It happened that in the same neighborhood lived a young man who was my rival. Let me mention no names yet, your grace. We became strenuous rivals for the hand of the beauty of Haworth.

"I pressed my suit, but I saw the prize slipping from my grasp, and at last I lost it altogether.

"She gave her hand to the hated one. I retired from the field, but with vengeance in my heart. In time a child came to bless the wedded lives of the pair, a little girl, who in time would inherit a fortune.

"From that time I plotted more and more. Whenever I caught sight of my enemy, for I regarded him as such, my blood boiled in my veins. I wanted his blood.

"Fairer and fairer grew the child. She crossed my path with her mother's looks in her eyes, and that maddened me more and more. I hated her because of that sweet face. One night I met her father on the moor. He was riding home to wife and child. With the demon of crime in my heart I watched him as he came on, humming a love song which she would never sing for me.

"I stopped him under a great oak. We had hot words, and when I walked away the moon looked down upon a white face that would never again respond to her smiles.

"It was a swift ride home. My heart, however, was light. I had settled with my rival. Soon afterward

I married and came to America. Here my son was born. He was younger than the people suspected, who knew not his real age. He looked older than he was, did Dan. He was really younger than the child of my rival.

"Soon after reaching this country the belle of Haworth died. I heard the tidings with a smile. Then came another surprise. Her child came to this land, accompanied by her uncle. The pair lived together. The uncle never married. They settled near me. I knew all about the fortune which would fall to the young miss when she reached a certain age. If the documents which proved these facts were not stolen she would become rich in a few years. I plotted to steal those papers. They were in her uncle's possession.

"I sent my son to do the work. He failed. At the head of a band of men he raided the house, but the papers were not found. He reported to me and I cursed him. General, the name of the man whom I slew in England was Jackson, his child is Dora Jackson, and her uncle the old blacksmith who threw my son dead at my feet."

For some time Rawdon, who had been appalled by this confession, did not speak.

He drew back and looked into the white face at the table, looking ghastlier in the light.

"To-morrow is my last day on earth, hence this con-

fession," continued Austin Jeffrys. "I am a murderer. I fled from my crime and added evil to it in this country. I am ready to meet the Avenger of all, but I want to cross swords with this madman who swings the hammer as he rides. Think you he will be in the battle to-morrow?"

"He is likely to be there."

"I trust he will. I trust Abner Jackson will be there, and that I may meet him. You should shun me, general."

"I pity you."

"I have no pity for myself. I have reaped the whirlwind after sowing the wind—that's all. You will give me a uniform?"

"I will see to that."

In a few moments Austin Jeffrys went back to his pallet and fell asleep.

Lord Rawdon looked at him for a few moments and left the house.

One hour later he returned, carrying over his arm the brilliant uniform of one of Tarleton's dragoons, sword and all.

He was about to cross the threshold of the old house when the sentry spoke:

"Your visitor is gone, your grace."

"When did he leave?"

"Half an hour ago."

A smiled gathered at Rawdon's lips.

He entered the house and threw a swift glance around.

On the camp table lay a folded note. He picked it up and read it at a glance:

"I will see you to-morrow on the field of glory. Till then farewell. JEFFRYS."

Rawdon tore the note into twenty pieces and flung them away.

"Vengeance will be swift to-morrow, if there is justice in vengeance," he said to himself. "Who would have thought that the heart of Austin Jeffrys carried such a secret?"

Five minutes later the guard heard his commander pacing the floor of the old house like an impatient tiger.

He had laid his plans to overwhelm Greene on the morrow.

He would sweep the Americans from the field and lighten the heart of the half-imbecile monarch across the water.

One sure blow, he thought, and Greene would never again raise the banner of revolt.

But Lord Rawdon, with all his clearsightedness, did not know.

He was true to his king, but there were men who were just as true to freedom.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FIGHT AT HOBKIRK'S HILL.

It is an old saying that "Man proposes, but God disposes." This is startlingly true in war, and when Lord Rawdon thought to crush Greene and deprive him forever afterward of being a help to the cause of liberty, he failed.

The American army consisted of nine hundred foot and fifty dragoons.

The forces of the British nearly doubled this and they were in better condition to fight and win a battle.

Gen. Greene had drawn up his little band on Hobkirk's Hill, a rise about two miles from Camden.

There, knowing that he would be attacked on the following day, he disposed his men, ordering all to stand firm and meet the enemy with the valor of Americans.

The troops had been twenty-four hours without food, but this was not uncommon among Greene's soldiers. They were used to fighting on empty stomachs. But rations were issued on the fateful morning, which was the twenty-fifth of April, and the hungry men sat down to breakfast.

Rodney and Jack, who had rejoined their command under Col. Washington, were engaged in discussing

the very scant meal when the fire from the videttes outside the camp told that the enemy was at hand.

They sprang up at once and ran to their horses.

"They are here!" cried Jack. "This day we shall meet our old friends, the enemy, again."

"I hope so, and Capt. Samson among the number."

Gen. Greene was in the act of pressing a cup of coffee to his lips when the sharp firing fell upon his ears.

Dashing it down he sprang to saddle, his mild blue eye lighting up with the fire of battle and his whole soul at once in the fray.

Everywhere the drums beat to arms, soldiers came running in from the posts and in a few minutes the whole army presented a determined front to the advancing redcoats.

A road ran directly through the patriot camp, and along it the army was stretched in a single line. One wing rested on a swamp, while the other seemed to lose itself in a wood.

The artillery had been planted so as to sweep the road, while Washington's dragoons were stationed behind it, and in reserve. It was nearly the same order of battle which had obtained at Guildford.

The suspense of silence which followed the firing on the outposts was painful.

Not a sign of the enemy could be seen.

"Where are they?" queried Jack.

"You will see enough of them by and by."

Presently a line of scarlet broke into view in the open ground that stretched from the foot of the hill.

The sight was magnificent, for, by Rawdon's orders, the soldiers had cleaned their clothes and brightened their muskets, and in the sunlight they shone like an army on parade.

Greene was, above all, a man of action. He had the faculty of solving battle problems in a flash, as it were, and the moment he caught sight of the British he issued his orders in one breath:

"Let Campbell and Ford turn their flanks, the cavalry take them in the rear and the center charge with trailed bayonets."

In an instant the entire army flung itself forward.

"Forward!" cried Col. Washington.

The dragoons rode toward the enemy's rear and gained it.

"Charge!"

With cries, which the British had heard before, the thundering dragoons fell upon them.

True, there were but fifty, but fifty madmen sabering and firing from the saddle as the horses bent to their allotted task, is enough to strike terror to the hearts of the coolest.

In a moment the fight in the rear was bloody and terrible.

In vain did the British rear guard try to stem the tide. The American artillery had opened on their ranks

from another direction; the center, composed of tried troops, was sweeping forward with trailing bayonets and the day was almost won.

The boy dragoons kept close together, as they had at Guildford.

Suddenly they heard bugles ring out above the battle's roar, and Jack looked at his friend.

Tarleton had come to the rescue.

With wild shouts the red-coated riders of the king's army swept forward.

The meeting between the two legions was the real shock of the battle.

"Look! look!" shouted Rodney, at Jack's ear. "Look over yonder. The man with the hammer!"

Sure enough, fighting against terrible odds, they saw Jackson, the blacksmith, striking right and left with his ponderous weapon, which was doing murderous execution.

The bloody hammer, swinging in mad circles round its owner's head, was beating through helmets and bone.

Standing in the saddle he looked like some old crusader among the Moslem hordes, or like a modern Cid in war.

The sight fascinated the two young Whigs for a moment, and they forgot their own peril.

The British fell back. Before that impetuous rush no men could stand long.

The boys saw the enemy close around Jackson, as if determined to crush him if it cost a hundred lives.

"He's down!" shouted Jack.

"No, he's up again. Look! The black horse likes the fight as well as his master."

"Let us lend him aid."

The idea was immediately acted upon.

The boy dragoons flew to the madman's rescue.

They had nearly reached the spot when they heard loud shouts of victory on the left.

They came from English throats.

Gunby's line had broken! The brave men who had stood so well at Guildford were fleeing before Rawdon's redcoats.

The fight was almost lost.

Never before had the Maryland line turned its back to the enemy in such manner.

Was Gunby mad?

"They've broken, curse them!" cried Rodney. "Why can't they stand up to their work?"

But they had work of their own ahead.

They saw the lines of scarlet close closer around the mad blacksmith.

But the hammer still rose and fell.

Suddenly there came upon the scene a dragoon with long white hair.

In his rush toward Jackson he pushed every other man aside and rode madly at his enemy.

The boys instinctively drew rein.

To rush on to Jackson's succor now would be the sheerest folly.

They saw—and it all passed before their eyes like a flashing dream—the collision of the white-haired dragoon and the man on the black horse.

A wild cry leaped from the old dragoon's lips.

"At last! Vengeance is mine and not God's! You know me, murderer. I am Austin Jeffrys!"

The master of Jeffrys Hall was answered with an eager cry.

Jackson swung the hammer once more and Jeffrys struck with his saber.

At the same time both men came together.

Austin Jeffrys darted nimbly under the hammer and dealt a quick, upward blow.

Just then the hammer fell, and the horses collided.

"Heavens!" cried Jack. "This is war. Come back, Rodney. The whole line has broken."

This seemed terribly true.

The sudden flight of his favorite regiment had almost broken the heroic Greene's heart.

He had ventured so much on them, had staked his hope on the Continental line, and now it was flying from the bayonets of Lord Rawdon.

He plunged into the very ranks of the regiment; he gave orders thick and fast; he pleaded, he raged, threatened and shamed them to another stand.

But it was too late.

He dashed to the summit of the hill and looked over the field.

The enemy had pierced his center, his artillery had been forced back and everywhere the columns in red were pushing on.

"Save the guns!" he commanded, and springing from his horse, in spite of the hailstorm of lead that filled the air, he seized the drag ropes with his own hands and helped to pull the cannon to a place of safety.

But it was not a place of safety for long.

The enemy came on and dashed straight for the guns.

The heroic Smith, with forty-five guards, tried to save them, and all were shot down but fourteen.

In another moment Tarleton's cavalry fell upon them and every man died at his post of duty.

The guns were now lost, but before the victorious foe could drag them off Col. Washington came down upon him.

It was the second charge of the day for this heroic band of riders.

They fell upon the British like a thunderbolt.

"Here you are!" cried a voice almost at Rodney's elbow, and the boy dragoon looked into the malicious face and savage eyes of his old enemy, Capt. Samson.

Before he could deliver a stroke the blade of the

Tory leader struck him flat across the face; he seemed to be thrown into a pit of darkness.

"Surrender!" cried a loud voice, which made the Tory turn.

A heavy roan horse was almost upon him and a sweeping saber crossed his face.

"Surrender to a young rebel whelp? You don't know Capt. Samson!"

"Then take that, sir."

The saber came down upon the Tory's head, though he tried to break the force of the blow, and he reeled, clutching at air as Jack struck again.

Down went Samson under the hoofs of maddened steeds and Jack was forced back.

"Don't lose your life, boy," and he was caught by the arm and dragged from the scene by a huge dragoon of the legion.

"But Rodney is yonder—on the field."

"We must save the guns."

Jack was forced to ride away. The guns were of more importance than the life of a boy dragoon.

And they saved the guns. The heroic Washington threw about the imperiled cannon a line of steel which the British could not break.

They rushed against it time after time, but the Americans disputed every inch of ground, and suddenly, in turn, fell upon the advancing foe and sabered their way almost to Rawdon's person.

That last act checked the enemy.

Jack rode slowly from the field, ever and anon looking back as if he would go to the help of Rodney.

It was the first time the fortunes of war had separated them.

He cared nothing for the long saber cut across his shoulder, a memento of Capt. Samson's prowess; he thought only of Rodney in the hands of the foe—perhaps dead upon the hill.

Greene retired from the field with the sullenness that ever characterized him.

Lord Rawdon had not broken the spirit of the bold leader.

He had merely wounded the lion and was afraid to follow far.

The ammunition of the little army of freedom was almost exhausted.

It had suffered terrible in the battle, and but for the breaking of the Maryland line victory might have perched upon his banners.

It was now likely that Cornwallis would unite with Rawdon and both armies fall upon Greene. But even this dark prospect did not daunt him. He only said: "We will dispute every inch of ground, though I know Lord Rawdon will push me back to the mountains."

The field of Hobkirk's Hill presented a terrible aspect after the battle.

Redcoats lay everywhere, and mingled with them were the bodies of their foes.

Locked in the embrace of death on the crimsoned ground the hunters found two men.

The white hair of one fell over the face of the other.

In the hand of one was the hilt of a sword and the fingers of his foe still gripped the handle of a hammer.

Both were dead. The enemies of former years had fought it out on the battlefield and both had avenged the past.

But Rodney. What of him? Let us see.

CHAPTER XXI.

VENGEANCE AND VICTORY.

For three days after the battle of Hobkirk's Hill, Jack Glenn tried to get tidings of Rodney.

The boy blacksmith had vanished as if the ground had opened and swallowed him. Jack saw him last as he went down before the blow delivered by Capt. Samson, and, though he crept back to the bloody field the night after the battle, searching among the still unburied dead, he had failed to find a single trace of his friend.

The army retired slowly, for Greene was hoping that Rawdon would follow up his advantage, but that wily officer knew when he had enough.

A week of uncertainty passed.

The Americans went back to their old camps to prepare for another test of strength, and Tories and Whigs rode the adjacent country, up to their old tricks.

Rodney surely was either dead or a prisoner of war.

If a prisoner, he was apt to be sent to Charleston, then in the hands of the enemy, and destined before the year closed to welcome Greene at the head of the gallant army.

So beautiful now was wood and field, clothed in green and crimson, that one would hardly believe that

war was in the land. Flowers bloomed everywhere, the breezes were soft and plentiful, and over all lifted the clear blue vault of heaven.

Jack was on the eve of carrying out a plan through which he intended to enter the British camp at Camden in search of Rodney when he received a note, which turned him to other fields.

It came from Callaway Manor, and was from both Alice and Dora asking him to visit them.

As Rodney was not included in the invitation, he supposed that they had heard of Hobkirk's Hill, and he prepared at once to visit the place.

Night was falling over the landscape when the boy dragoon rode up the tree-fringed way to the old mansion. The silence that surrounded him was ominous, for he had noticed that such a silence in time of war boded a person no good.

He reached the porch and was dismounting, when a figure seemed to rise from the ground and his arm was eagerly clutched.

"Am it you, massa?" inquired a negro's voice.

"It is me, Cupe. What is it?"

"Dar am Tories in de neighborhood. Dey been watchin' de house long befo' dark."

"Tories?" echoed Jack.

"Cap'n Samson and his men."

"What! is that rascal living yet? I had hoped I finished him at Hobkirk's Hill."

"He am de livingest man in all dese parts. An' de wust."

"Right you are as to the latter observation, Cupe. Where are the young ladies?"

"In de house. I'm de—de what you call it in wah?"

"The picket."

"That's it. Take yer hoss round de house, an' dey'll let you in de back way."

Jack obeyed, and in a short time stood in a semi-darkened room in the presence of the two girls.

They welcomed and questioned him in low voices.

They had sent for him to learn, if they could, particulars as to Rodney's present whereabouts.

Jack was telling all he knew, and was in the midst of his account when Cupe darted across the room.

"Dey am here!" he cried, in affrighted accents. "Cap'n Samson is jes' outside."

Remembering the former attack on the manor, Jack sprang to the door and noticed that it had already been effectually barricaded.

This time there was no demand for surrender.

Before the inmates of the manor house could think the door was struck a succession of blows which no portal could withstand, and it quivered and fell inward.

In another moment the Tory band swarmed into the house.

"Caught you all napping this time!" laughed Capt. Samson as he came forward, backed by his followers.

Jack laid his hand on his pistol, but did not draw, for half a dozen weapons were thrust into his face.

As for the girls, they fell back and gave the triumphant foes look for look.

"I guess you won't forget this call," resumed the Tory leader. "If I'm not mistaken, you haven't forgotten the last one. We have the rebellion in North America about suppressed and hangman's day is about to dawn."

"On which side?" cried Mistress Alice.

"On ours, of course. You don't suppose, miss, that the king will let the Whigs pull the rope?"

Alice, with a look of supreme contempt, turned away.

"Search the old nest!" commanded Capt. Samson to his men. "I'll take care of the prisoners. If you find anything valuable take it. We are told to confiscate anything we find that belongs to rebels. I don't want you to be mealy-mouthed about this business, boys. After we've searched the nest we'll lighten the heavens with a little fire."

"Brute!" exclaimed Alice, at thought of her home being destroyed by the Tories.

"That's a compliment, I suppose," grinned Capt. Samson.

The partisans dispersed in their search, and presently they were ransacking Callaway Manor to their heart's content.

One of the boldest cut the portrait of Alice's mother from its frame and twisted it round his arm.

The eyes of the girl flashed at this.

In another moment no one was left in the chamber but the prisoners and Capt. Samson.

He leaned against a table, his large arms folded upon his broad chest, watching the three as the hawk watches the dove it has ensnared.

"Capt. Samson, what became of my friend, Rodney Black?" questioned Jack.

"You lost him at Camden, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Oh, the flowers are blooming over him already," was the reply.

"I don't believe it!" cried the boy, for something in Capt. Samson's manner belied his words.

"Why ask me, then?"

Jack turned away in time to see Alice reach the mahogany mantel and jerk something from it.

In another second Capt. Samson was looking down the muzzle of a pistol.

The action occupied so short a time that the Tory chieftain could not realize his peril.

"What did I tell you the night you dragged me from my father's arms just before you hanged him?" cried the fair avenger. "Did I not say that vengeance should be mine one of these days?"

Samson fell back and glared at the speaker.

"Why not to-night?" continued Alice. "Why not rid the earth of its greatest curse—the South of its king monster? You cannot blot out liberty in the colonies any more than you can stem the ocean tides with a feather. It will thrive long after you are dust, Capt. Samson. That night of horror witnessed your triumph; to-night shall witness the vengeance of Thomas Callaway's child!"

Jack held his breath.

He feared for the fair girl after her shot, but he knew that she intended to settle forever with the Tory of the Carolinas.

"You need make no preparation for death," she went on, looking over the barrel of the weapon straight into Capt. Samson's face. "For you there is no forgiveness. I am a daughter of desperation, and my hand to-night avenges more than one dark crime."

She seemed to take a step nearer the speechless man; he caught what he thought was a movement, and threw out his hand to beat down the pistol, but that instant it flashed in his bearded face.

There was a cry, a wild throwing up of a pair of long arms, and the body of Capt. Samson fell against the wall.

Never villain met a more deserved fate.

"Quick!" cried Jack to the girls. "Fly before the avengers come back!"

The three plunged from the house and across the porch.

Into the dusk they fled, and heard the Tories clattering back into the room where their leader lay.

"Halt!" shouted one of the guards outside, but—Jack flashed his pistol in the fellow's face, and they ran on.

Already the royalists were pouring out of the house.

The air was filled with cries of vengeance as they hunted everywhere for their prey.

"Charge! Down with the Tories of South Carolina!" rang out a voice above the imprecations of the baffled band.

The Tories stopped and heard the clatter of horse's hoofs in the road.

Past the spot where Jack and the girls had halted dashed a detachment of Americans, and in another moment they were sabering right among the king's men.

"It must be Black Gorman," said Jack, to his companions. "They ride like Gorman's men."

Before this furious charge the Tories, having lost their leader, could not stand long.

They fell back in dismay and were chased down the road and through the timber.

"Where are the inmates of the manor?" inquired a loud voice on the porch.

"'Tis Rodney!" exclaimed Jack, as he bounded for-

ward and appeared at the speaker's side. "So you've come back from the dead, boy?"

Rodney turned and threw his arms about his companion.

"As good as back from the dead," he said. "I gave the enemy the slip at Camden, whither I was carried after the battle, and here I am at last, and just in the nick of time."

"But you were wounded at Hobkirk's Hill?"

"Not badly. I thought when I fell under the horses that I had seen my last fight, but I was strangely saved. A giant trooper fell upon me, crushing me into the ground, as it seemed, and that preserved my life. Ah, here are our friends," and Rodney held out his hands to the two girls.

He then related how he had fallen in with Black Gorman's men, who were on the lookout for Capt. Samson, and how he had followed them to the spot where they encountered the Tory chief.

"I'm sorry he got away," Rodney said.

"He did not escape. He is yonder."

"In the house, Jack?"

"Yes."

"Then we have an important prisoner."

"But one who will never stretch hemp."

They entered the house and Jack held the light near the dark face on the floor.

The girls looked on without a word, while Jack told to Rodney the story of the Tory's doom.

* * * * * * *

The next day and the next the two boy dragoons spent at Callaway Manor.

While there the waves of war did not trouble them.

When the time came for their departure the two girls accompanied them to Greene's camp, and were introduced to the American warrior.

"As brave as the bravest!" said the gentle Greene as he held their hands. "With men like you to strike for liberty, King George will never again enslave his North American colonies. Cornwallis has turned toward the Virginias, where Washington and the French await him, and where the last act of this war, please God, who has been with us through light and shadow, will take place."

"Will you not visit Callaway Manor, some time, general?" asked Mistress Alice.

"I shall be glad to see your home and enjoy its hospitalities," smiled Greene. "But we will wait till we can enjoy them to the full. Then I will come and I know you will have a smile for Nathaniel Greene, for I myself have smiled but little these seven years of war.

The girls were escorted home, and Jack and Rodney again took up the trade of war.

They followed the fortunes of Greene to the end.

They were with him at the siege of Ninety-Six, they sabered behind Washington at Eutaw Springs, where the British army was crippled beyond repair. They kept close to his side, until one day, after the haughty Cornwallis had delivered up his blade at Yorktown, Greene entered Charleston at the head of his little army amid the shouts of a happy populace.

This was on the 13th of December, a day long to be remembered in the battle-shattered South, for then the flag of the new nation kissed the breeze, while the flag of England floated droopingly from the vessels that bore forever from these shores the army of George III.

After the war Dora came into possession of the fortune due her from the mother country, but at Alice's request continued to reside for some time at Callaway Manor, in whose stateliest chamber one day a double ceremony was performed—graced by some of the heroes of the long struggle.

The Swamp Fox was there, and so was Col. Washington, the great cavalry leader of the Revolution; but the most distinguished guest was a portly man, with mild, blue eyes, who gave away the brides.

Gen. Greene had made a long journey to be present at the ceremony, and he was received with delight by the hundreds who came from the surrounding region to greet him.

Callaway Manor was inhabitated for many years by

Rodney and Mistress Alice, while a splendid home arose where the old forge once stood, and there was a great deal of visiting between the places.

Nathaniel Greene lived but a short time after the close of the war.

He died from the effects of a sunstroke on the 18th of June, 1786, and was laid away with imposing honors.

One of the great leaders of the Revolution, he has received the adulation of his countrymen for more than a century. Throughout the great struggle he was the firm friend of Washington, whom he loved next to his country; and it is of him that Washington truly said:

"Could he but promote the interests of his country in the character of a corporal, he would exchange, without a murmur, his epaulettes for the knot."

So fought and died this heroic man, and in the years that followed the Revolution many a patriot referred with pride to the times when he fought beneath the banners of the Quaker's son—Nathaniel Greene.

THE END.

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